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SPORT IRELAND

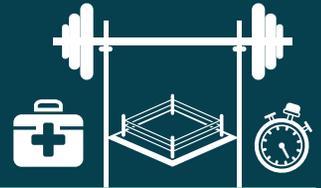
# The Rio Review

The official report into Ireland's  
campaign for the Rio 2016 Olympic  
and Paralympic Games

**Sport Ireland** aims to assist National Governing Bodies in supporting and delivering elite Irish athletes to international success. This elite success is defined as Irish athletes reaching finals and achieving medals at European, World, Olympic, and Paralympic level.

**268** athletes used the Sport Ireland Institute in 2016 **14** Olympic and Paralympic sports

**Sport Ireland Institute High Performance Centre** includes a strength & conditioning area, mixed training zone, rehab/medical area, physiology lab and a dedicated boxing area.



**26** COACHES ON THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE PODIUM PROGRAMME

COACHES ON THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE HORIZON PROGRAMME

**17**



SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS FOR ACCREDITATION IN THE PROFESSIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAMME (PQAP)

**450** MEDICAL REFERRALS FROM 2013-2016  
(CARDIAC SCREENING, MRIs, DEXA SCANS AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY)



**6** CARDIAC SCREENS IN 2016



**443**

BLOOD TESTS ON 181 INDIVIDUAL ATHLETES

## TEAM IRELAND PERFORMANCES



### OLYMPIC

MEDALS  
TOP 10  
TOP 20



### PARALYMPIC

MEDALS  
TOP 8



## FACILITIES AT Sport Ireland National Sports Campus



- NATIONAL AQUATIC CENTRE
- NATIONAL DIVING TRAINING CENTRE
- NATIONAL HORSE SPORT ARENA
- NATIONAL MODERN PENTATHLON TRAINING CENTRE
- SPORT IRELAND NATIONAL INDOOR ARENA



## RIO INVESTMENT CYCLE

TOTAL INVESTMENT FOR RIO CYCLE: €37,737m



# Foreword

The Olympic and Paralympic review process is an essential component of the Irish high performance system. The implementation of the recommendations of the quadrennial reviews has been a driver of Irish high performance programmes for individual sports and the system as a whole.

The Rio Review process has been comprehensive and robust. The critical feature of this Review is that the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) took a greater level of control in debriefing their own experiences. This Review reflects the views of all the key players within the high performance system. Endorsed by Sport Ireland, it is a mandate for the NGBs to fully implement the recommendations that will improve the high performance system in Ireland.

There were outstanding performances in Rio at both the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Olympic roll of honour received a new addition in Rowing, with Sailing repeating its podium success achieved in Moscow 1980, demonstrating Ireland's ability to be competitive in multiple disciplines. Team Ireland has built on the success of Beijing and London, and notwithstanding problems that arose, Rio was a clear demonstration that Ireland can compete at the very highest levels of international sport.

Sport Ireland is committed to the ongoing development of the Sport Ireland Institute and adding to the extensive facilities on the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus. These are real commitments to high performance sport in Ireland that will make a significant difference to Irish athletes who aspire to compete at the top level.

Olympic and Paralympic sport is a brutally competitive arena. Ireland has shown it can succeed and has the potential to be even better. A strong review process and adherence to the outcomes of the process is one key element in building success. We want to thank everyone who contributed to the Rio Review and making it a strong and valuable contribution to the development of Irish high performance sport.



**Kieran Mulvey**  
Chairman, Sport Ireland



**John Treacy**  
Chief Executive, Sport Ireland

# Introduction

## by the High Performance Committee of Sport Ireland

Sport Ireland began the process of reviewing the overall Rio Cycle (2013 - 2016) in advance of the commencement of the Olympic Games in August and the Paralympic Games in September. This Review Process was fully completed by December 2016. The process was robust, with a series of specific stages, significant NGB involvement, and independent oversight. It was designed with the purpose of providing a fair assessment of Ireland's Olympic and Paralympic campaign; and beyond this, producing independent evidence-based recommendations which will be essential in improving the Irish high performance system as we move forward.

Overall, Team Ireland delivered a high standard of performance at the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The performances showed that Team Ireland was well prepared and had campaigned for the Olympics and Paralympics based on a strong record of achievement in the Rio cycle.

The overall 2016 Games environment in Rio presented a number of difficulties for all competitors and some issues specific to the Irish Olympic team. These challenges were acknowledged by athletes and team staff during the review process.

At the Olympic Games there were two silver medals won. These exceptional achievements were supported by superb performances across a number of disciplines. Beyond podium results in Rio, Team Ireland saw significant increases in the number of top-10 and top-20 performances over previous Games.

The specific target of 3 medals was not reached at the Rio Olympic Games. In boxing, where Ireland was expected to secure medal success, beyond the system issues identified, legitimate concerns existed around the adjudication in Rio.

Ireland won 11 medals at the Paralympic Games which exceeded the pre-Games target of 8. The medal success in Rio was achieved through the strength of 3 high quality programmes that supported some outstanding athletes. The quality of the coaching was also notable. Credit is due to everyone involved in Paralympics Ireland in their efforts to replicate and exceed the successes of London 2012. Given the changes to Rio's competition programme, the team's success was made even more remarkable.

The Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI) had a central role in leading Team Ireland at Rio. Notwithstanding significant national and international attention on the OCI in Rio, there was limited comment made in the Review on the OCI operating as a performance barrier. However, the criticisms of the OCI should be addressed with the purpose of developing better relationships moving into the Tokyo cycle.

In general, there was positive feedback on the pre-Games holding camp in Uberlandia. However, it is recognised that this model does not work for every sport and its suitability is specific to where the Games are being hosted. The purpose and extent of a pre-Games holding camp is an area for further consideration in advance of Tokyo 2020.

One of the themes that emerged from the review is an apparent disconnect between some NGB boards and their high performance programmes. It has been highlighted that within some programmes, the Board's understanding and support for high performance requires improvement. This is an issue meriting further exploration as the governance of HP programmes is a concern of Sport Ireland.

The review findings highlighted the strong level of performance services provided by Sport Ireland Institute. There is a desire to gain access to further support if capacity is available in the future. In particular, there are suggestions that preparing athletes for the post-Games experience is an area that is valued and should be enhanced. NGBs should collaborate to a greater extent in this project.

As previously referenced, the IABA's high performance programme failed to deliver on its pre-Games medal expectations. While the performances in Rio were disappointing, the IABA's review has proposed a range of strong recommendations which provides a blueprint for the sport to progress.

It was a landmark Olympic Games for men's hockey having qualified for Rio 2016 after narrowly missing out on London 2012. This was the first time since 1948 that a team sport was contested by Ireland. This highlighted the potential of Irish teams with rugby 7s and cricket also part of the Irish system. While team sports provide huge opportunities, the Rio experience raises a question on how team sports in general can be best supported in the future.

There is an unambiguous link between success in high performance sport and levels of investment. There is view widely shared in the high performance community that increased investment is required within the Irish system. However, to the credit of the participating sports, they did not fixate on financial issues. In general, they reflected internally on matters that impacted performance and the reviews are more useful as a result.

The review process has generated extensive information and the individual reports are a substantial piece of work, primarily for personnel within NGB's and key stakeholders in the high performance system. Each NGB had a significant role in developing the reports which should make them immediately relevant to their requirements and easier to adopt.

In order to maximise the impact of the review, each of the NGBs are now tasked with addressing and fully implementing the specific recommendations. Sport Ireland's investment in high performance programmes will be dependent on clear implementation plans from each NGB in their future strategic and performance plan documents.

Furthermore, from Sport Ireland's point of view there is a need to assess how high performance investment can be optimally targeted at programmes best placed to consistently achieve medals at international level in the future. Based on insights gathered throughout the Rio cycle, a proposed high performance investment framework has been developed and will be implemented for the Tokyo cycle.



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# The Review Process

The main objectives for each stage of this Review Process included:

**PHASE 1:**  
Pre-Games Assessment  
- conducted by Sport Ireland and completed by the High Performance Lead in each sport

- Identifying the Rio performance expectations held by the NGBs for their athletes
- Identifying the health of an NGB's HP System prior to the Games

**PHASE 2:**  
Post-Games Online Surveys – administered to athletes, coaches, support staff, Performance Directors, Chief Executive Officers, and Board Members

- Gather key reflections on preparation and performance in close proximity after the Games experience
- Obtaining extensive data from across the high performance programmes to inform the facilitator reviews

**PHASE 3:**  
Facilitator-led Independent Reviews – involving key high performance stakeholders within each sport participating at the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games

- Reporting the performances and results of Irish athletes at the Games
- Debriefing with each NGB on their Games performances
- Identifying strategic reflections on the Olympic and Paralympic Cycle as a whole
- Identifying specific recommendations for sports to implement to enhance their success in the 2017-2020 Olympic and Paralympic Cycle

Each sport's Rio Review was signed off by their CEO and submitted to Sport Ireland, including all of the independent findings, conclusions, and recommendations. In addition to this, an independent facilitator was assigned to conduct a review across all stakeholders in the high performance system. This included interviews with key individuals within Sport Ireland's High Performance Committee, Sport Ireland Institute, Sport Northern Ireland, Olympic Council of Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, Department of Transport, Tourism, & Sport, and sport media outlets, with the objective of collecting broader system-level perspectives.

## PHASE 1: Pre-Games assessment summary

The Pre-Games Assessment had a strong engagement from the performance leads overall and a good level of detail was provided in the submissions. In terms of performance targets and preparation for Rio 2016, the majority of sports had set realistic targets and demonstrated a strong understanding of preparation and expected athlete performance at the Games. It was useful to compare this data with actual outcomes and post Games results.

Over the course of the Rio cycle, a number of key themes emerged across the high performance programmes. The sports noted the strong support provided by Sport Ireland Institute. However, a number stated that increased access to performance and medical services is required. In addition, there is a strain on coaching resources across a number of programmes with many coaches covering additional duties or holding dual roles. There is mixed view on the level of governance of high performance, with some programmes citing improvements, while in others it was an area of concern. Moreover, contact time with athletes was a key area for performance leads, centralised programmes generally emphasised

the importance of maintaining a daily training base, while non-centralised programmes noted the need to increase contact time with athletes through training camps, more competitions, or engagement with services.

Looking beyond Rio 2016, a number of common areas of strategic focus were referenced in the Pre-Games assessment. Elite coach development and further coaching resources was identified as important in a number of programmes. This included having resources to separate coaching from administration and management roles. Further to this, increased competition exposure for athletes through more competitions or training camps/sparring with other nations was also highlighted. There was mixed views on the strength of talent pipeline across the sports with some programmes noting a strong calibre of upcoming athletes, while for others it was an area in need of improvement. Moreover, continued focus on the governance of the high performance was a common theme across a number of the sports.

## PHASE 2: Post-Games Survey Summary

To fully capture the critical information on Rio 2016, online surveys were conducted within 4 weeks of the conclusion of the Games and provided athletes, coaches, support staff, Performance Directors, CEO's, and Board Members with the opportunity to express their views on the Games preparation and performance. Although there was a relatively strong response rate across both Olympic and Paralympic surveys (71%), it should be noted that the response rate from Olympic athletes was disappointing with only 45 out of the invited 80 participating (56%).

### Olympic surveys

The majority of athletes that responded reflected positively on the year leading into the Games, highlighting coach support, service support, and facility access as satisfactory. Overall, athletes were relatively satisfied with their own performance and were also generally positive about the support received from their NGB and the Sport Ireland Institute in the build up to the Games. Financial support from Carding was cited as an area where many athletes were dissatisfied. The support from the OCI prior to the Games was noted for improvement.

Athletes were again positive about their experiences within the Daily Training Programme, highlighting communication and programme management as an area where improvements could be made.

The various aspects of Games Readiness included physical, tactical, mental, Games experience, and post-Games experience readiness, and was generally reflected by athletes as being satisfactory. However, it

was evident that the post-Games period was an area where athletes felt the least prepared for and this reflection aligned to the identified need to increase the services of the Sport Ireland Institute's Games Preparation Programme.

### Paralympic surveys

The majority of athletes responded positively on the support they received in the lead up to the Games and the consensus from athletes and coaches was that the daily training environment was a highly positive one throughout the cycle. However, it should be noted that almost half the athletes responded as very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their own performance. A number of stakeholders reported a lack understanding of clear purpose and effective communication across the programmes.

The extent of support for Paralympic sports within smaller NGBs was identified as an area of concern. Moreover, financial support was an area of dissatisfaction for a number of athletes that were not part of the carding system.

In terms of readiness for the post-Games experience, generally athletes rated it as somewhat positive and a number referenced the Sport Ireland Institute's preparation workshop. However, less than half reported applying their learnings from the workshop over the course of their Games experience.

Finally, with regard to board member responses, most areas rated positively except for talent identification and development which was identified as an area requiring further focus.

## PHASE 3: Facilitator-led Independent Reviews

Detailed below is the list of individuals who were assigned as Review Facilitators to each NGB.

| National Governing Body                       | Assigned Review Facilitator(s)         |
|---|--|
| Athletics Ireland                             | Nancy Chillingworth                    |
| Badminton Ireland                             | Maeve Buckley                          |
| International Athletic Boxing Association     | Brian MacNeice                         |
| Cycling Ireland                               | Ciaran Ward                            |
| Confederation of Golf in Ireland (GUI & ILGU) | Maeve Buckley                          |
| Gymnastics Ireland                            | Prof Craig Mahoney                     |
| Hockey Ireland                                | Eddie O'Sullivan                       |
| Horse Sport Ireland                           | Nancy Chillingworth                    |
| Paralympics Ireland                           | Maeve Buckley & Tricia Heberle         |
| Pentathlon Ireland                            | Nancy Chillingworth                    |
| Rowing Ireland                                | Dr Chris Shambrook & Dr Katherine Bond |
| Irish Sailing Association                     | Craig Mahoney                          |
| Swim Ireland                                  | Brian MacNeice                         |
| Triathlon Ireland                             | Nancy Chillingworth                    |
| Online survey management & reports            | Nancy Chillingworth                    |
| HP System stakeholder interviews              | Maeve Buckley                          |

### Terms of Reference:

1. To review and assess the performances and results of Irish athletes at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.
2. To identify the particular factors that contributed to or impacted upon performances at the Games.
3. To review and assess the strategy, annual planning, and preparation in the sport, and its impact on performance, over the four year cycle with a view to providing key learnings for the Tokyo 2020 cycle.
4. To review and assess the engagement and interaction of the sport with Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, and the Olympic Council of Ireland over the four-year cycle.
5. To review and assess the level of support provided by the NGB for the performance plan and preparation for the Rio 2016 Games, including the governance structure within the sport.
6. To provide specific and measurable recommendations, based on evidence from the review, that will have a positive impact on the sport's high performance programme, and consequently, the overall high performance system.

# Team Ireland Performances

## Rio 2016 Olympic Games - Team Ireland Performances

The 2016 Olympic Games saw 77 athletes represent Team Ireland across 14 different sports. Finishing 62nd on the overall medals table, Ireland achieved 2 silver medals in rowing and sailing, and when ranked against medals per capita, Ireland had a 38th place finish.

The major ranking performances by Team Ireland included:



## Rio 2016 Paralympic Games – Team Ireland Performances

The 2016 Paralympic Games saw 48 athletes represent Team Ireland across 10 sports. Finishing 28th on the overall medals table, Ireland achieved 11 medals in athletics, swimming and cycling (four gold, four silver, three bronze), and when ranked against medals per capita, Ireland placed 5th in the world.

The medal success in Rio was achieved through programmes that benefited from from integrated services provided by the Sport Ireland Institute and high quality coaching from across the system.

The major ranking performances by Team Ireland included:



# High Performance Stakeholder Review

Facilitator: Maeve Buckley

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rio was a positive Olympics from a performance perspective, with Ireland achieving thirty top twenty finishes and with clear evidence of overall systemic improvement across the quadrennial, in terms of medals won at European and World level, personal bests, percentage improvements, etc. There was a negative impact too, in terms of the international and domestic controversies that took place, and whilst not impacting athlete performance, posed serious questions around governance and reputation.

The High Performance (HP) structure in Ireland has moved forward enormously since the original strategy was developed in 2002, with the Sport Ireland Institute, the High Performance Programme investment, the International Carding Scheme and National Sports Campus all being hugely significant in allowing for HP programmes to be built within NGBs and in supporting elite athletes' focus entirely on sporting success, whilst Ireland has many talented coaches and Performance Directors in the system. However, there remains limited commercial support for HP sport, with sports then over-reliant on the public purse and limited government funding being spread too thinly over too many sports. Funding models are not the same in all countries, and geography and culture are different, so to compare countries is not to compare like with like, but there are some interesting comparators with other countries. Other systems invest more than us on a per capita/GDP basis, investment tends to be to targeted sports, and there are some functioning cross-sport Talent ID programmes and commercial funding models that could be interesting to study further from an Irish context.

The feeling is that, having made huge advances, the time is right now to again update the HP strategy for Ireland, and to deliver a renewed shared vision across the system. Terms of reference for a Performance Solutions Team have been put to the High Performance Committee of Sport Ireland and this unit would be a significant step forward in terms of monitoring of HP investment. The view is that Ireland is a small country and that can lend it many advantages, including flexibility - if it were to focus resources on a reduced number of key sports, whilst having a mechanism to support outliers, it could in time be very competitive in those key sports on the world stage. Now is the opportunity to refresh our HP strategy, and collectively decide what we want to achieve as a nation from a HP perspective, and be ambitious in our goals. Those goals need to be collectively shared in a strategy with clear measurable targets, and which is planned out over two Olympic cycles, with clearly stated medal targets so that expectations are clear. Team sports as well as individual sports need to be factored into the overall strategy. Investment needs to be against strict criteria and organizational development guidelines, including governance, with zero tolerance for deviation. The Sport Ireland Institute should be resourced to develop a cross-sport Talent ID programme, and also to amplify existing services. With an overarching HP plan in place, we need to seek more meaningful investment from government and corporate Ireland in HP sport, and have a scale of investment sufficient for the refreshed ambition. With the solid building blocks already there, and a new strategy to focus on, the feeling is that our sporting nation could make us even more proud over the cycles ahead.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations pertain to areas of improvement for High Performance (HP) in Ireland leading into Tokyo 2020 and Summer Olympics 2024:

1. Using this review process, and based on the evolution seen over the last Olympic cycles, complete an audit of all HP systems and a review of current HP policy and determine whether the current system is optimal for the next cycles. Through this determine what is a good investment for Ireland, and where the differentiating factors lie between the NGBs (i.e. governance, critical mass of athletes, etc.). Ask what we want to achieve as a sporting nation and what is our definition of world-class success, and through that process define where our ambition lies.
2. Develop a multi-cycle strategy (8 years+) that robustly focuses on the sports with the potential to deliver the best outcomes, based on the data derived from the audit. This strategic planning needs to involve all stakeholders (sports, government, Sport Ireland, Institute) but then Sport Ireland/Sport Ireland Institute should be given the authority to drive it and deliver it. The targets in this strategy need to be ambitious and measurable, with clearly stated medal targets and outcomes, and the strategy should be broadly communicated to the wider public.
3. The strategy should be based on a tiered sport system, with a limited number of podium/ tier one sports, and below that sports with a development potential. This tiered sport system must be appropriate to Ireland and devised by and for Ireland. Those HP sports should be evaluated continuously by a Performance Evaluations team, with sanction for underperformance, and governance being a critical performance criterion. Authority should be given to the HP leadership to make and deliver decisions based on the strategy and performance evaluation, rather than any political consideration.
4. Government must invest in a more meaningful way against HP sport, based on this strategy, and invest current spend on a scale appropriate for the ambition. Corporate Ireland needs to get behind investment in HP sport and commercial models should be explored to make sports less fully reliant on state funding.
5. The role of the Sport Ireland Institute should be developed, with resource put specifically into the areas of Performance Evaluation, (Athlete) Talent ID, and (Coaching/PD) Talent Development, whilst continuing to support and expand current services. The SII needs to prove that it is an evidence-driven organization, challenging the system, whilst supporting the athletes and coaches, and proving the worth of the HP investment.
6. A national athlete Talent ID programme should be developed to identify athlete cross-sport potential and to build talent pipelines across a number of sports.
7. Consideration should be given to HP training for Boards, to broaden understanding between Boards and HP team.
8. Thought should be given to best methods/forums for ongoing consultation between government, its agencies, the sports, and Sport NI/SINI, so as to maintain strong relationships and clarity of purpose.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION & FINDINGS

### Strategic reflections on Rio 2016

**Objective: To review and assess the overall performance of Team Ireland at the Rio 2016 Summer Olympic Games.**

There is an understanding that Rio was overall a very positive Olympics from a performance perspective, with Ireland achieving thirty top twenty finishes. Ireland had twelve 'top eight' performances (a top eight finish being industry standard for podium quality, and also thus recipients of Olympic diplomas), and a further four 'top ten' finishes. In terms of progression, Ireland has improved from three 'top ten' finishes in Athens 2004, to nine in Beijing 2008, fourteen in London 2012, through to sixteen this year. This would indicate overall systemic improvements and progression. However, there were less podium finishes, with Ireland winning six medals in London 2012, but only two in Rio 2016, and in two different sports, which belies somewhat the systemic improvement. There is an understanding also that there were big improvements across the entire cycle in terms of medals won at European and World level, personal bests, percentage improvements, etc.

There is a feeling that Rio 2016 also reflected badly on sport at times, both from an international and domestic perspective. From an international dimension there was controversy around the location of the Games itself (clearance of favelas, hygiene, poor finish of the Olympic Village etc.), the banning of Russian athletes, and the sidelining of all AIBA (International Boxing Association) Rio judges post-Games. From an Irish perspective there was the failed drug test of boxer followed by a general under-performance of the boxing team, as well as the ticketing scandal. The reporting of these incidences played out badly for Ireland, and whilst not impacting athlete performance, threw up serious questions around governance. The view is that in time the general public will reflect on Rio as being a less than satisfactory Games, except for two bright moments provided by the O'Donovan brothers and Annalise Murphy, and it will have done little to

further overall appreciation and understanding of high-performance sport. The general public will have little understanding of the overall greatly improved performances of Irish athletes, as only medals impact the public psyche. High performance sport can be somewhat esoteric to grasp for those not involved in it, and Rio 2016 did little to improve understanding and state a positive case for increased tax-payer or corporate investment.

#### KEY FINDINGS

- Rio 2016 was a positive Olympics from a performance perspective with thirty top twenty finishes, showing sustained progression across the last four quadrennials, and thus evidence of overall systemic improvement.
- Rio 2016 reflected badly on sport at times, both from an international and domestic perspective, throwing up questions around governance and reputation.

## Current status of the High Performance (HP) System in Ireland

**Objective:** To provide a commentary on the High Performance System as a whole, and the progress to date.

As per the Road to Rio and beyond document, 'The current Irish HP system is in existence since 2002. Since then, over €100m has been invested in Irish HP sport. The system has gone through clear stages of development framed by each of the Olympic cycles.' As per the National Sports Policy Framework Paper, 'Sport Ireland is responsible for the improvement in standards in high performance sport. With the establishment of Sport Ireland, all of the bodies connected with high performance (Sport Ireland Institute, Coaching Ireland and National Sports Campus) are now embedded in one entity. This presents a real opportunity to deliver a more enhanced and integrated programme of work in order to achieve greater and more sustained high performance success'. The stated vision for the HP system is 'Irish athletes achieving consistent world class success' and the mission is to 'Invest in NGBs that can produce world class athletes on a consistent and repeatable basis' and to 'Create an environment that facilitate the development of NGBs (National Governing Bodies) to produce this calibre of athlete'.

The common view is that the HP structure has improved enormously since the original strategy was developed in 2002. The High Performance Programme and the International Carding Scheme have been hugely significant in allowing for HP programmes to be built within NGBs and in supporting elite athletes and allowing them to focus entirely on sporting success. The launch of the Sport Ireland Institute in 2006 is perceived as having been a game changer, with great advances made particularly in the provision of physiotherapy, strength and conditioning (S&C), and medical services, allowing for significant improvements in managing the health and robustness of the athletes. Development in facilities has been significant, with the National Sports Campus (NSC) providing the opportunity for NGBs to interact with each other, and the Sport Ireland Institute building giving that opportunity to

athletes, and in a good location, with good buy-in from the sports. There is a strong functioning HP Committee, with representation from Sport Ireland, Sport Ireland Institute and external practitioners. Overall leadership within the system has improved, with programmes such as the Pursuit of Excellence (PEP) programme supporting the development of coaching and performance director (PD) talent. Many of the NGBs themselves have grown significantly during that time, building teams of professional full-time staff, and there are several examples of very good practice and world class programmes. There is a good supply of raw talent at athlete level.

The weaknesses in the system are also apparent. There is inadequate state funding in high performance sport. There is limited commercial support for HP sport, with sports then over-reliant on the public purse. These limited financial resources (€44.1m over four years is the entire investment, including carding scheme, programme investment, and Sport Ireland Institute costs) are spread too thinly over too many sports - twenty-one sports in total - many of whom will be unlikely to achieve podium success. The system is currently not geared to support team sports, with team athletes not eligible for carding, only programme funding. The annual funding application cycle is cited as problematic for NGBs. The carding scheme is perceived as being spread amongst too many athletes, and often not early enough in their development cycle. Some NGBs struggle to balance participation and high performance with limited resources, whilst the quantity of performance services is inadequate to meet the demand. There are problems at transition stages along the athlete pathway, with athletes being lost. There is a leadership talent drain, with high performers within our HP system being lost to other countries and systems, and a lack of investment in talent, both at a coaching and PD level.

The feeling is that, having made huge advances, the time is right now to again update the HP strategy for Ireland, and to deliver a renewed shared vision across the system.

#### KEY FINDINGS

- Significant advances have been made in HP in Ireland since 2002, with the High Performance Programme, the International Carding Scheme, the Sport Ireland Institute and the National Sports Campus all underpinning those improvements.
- The system also has weaknesses - inadequate funding with resources spread too thinly, loss of athlete and management talent, governance issues in some sports.

## High Performance Structure in Ireland

**Objective: To provide a commentary on specific elements within the High Performance Structure.**

### Level of NGB Governance & Reputation

The standard of governance in Irish NGBs is recognized as being of great significance in particular post-Rio 2016. Issues within the IABA and the OCI have been viewed negatively across the country and created a reputational damage to sport. By and large those on the Boards of NGBs are giving large amounts of their time voluntarily back to their sport, in many cases having participated in that sport for many years, and this voluntary contribution is much appreciated. However, those who have participated in the sport all their lives can have strong opinions on the sport, including the elite end of the sport, but those views are often not contemporary and cognizant of what HP sport looks like in 2016.

The best governed NGBs in Ireland are generally recognized as those who are well along the road of implementing the governance code, and who have invited independent directors from outside the sport to sit on the Board. The recent government impetus to make the governance code mandatory is welcomed by the NGBs. The strongest decision-making bodies tend to include a sufficient number of people who are free from a close connection to the organisation and who provide constructive challenge. (The UK currently requires a minimum of 25% independent Board members, and looks set to introduce the mandatory requirement for an independent Chairperson). From the HP point of view, even on well governed Boards with independent professional expertise, there can be a lack of knowledge on what HP really is, and why it deserves funding to the extent required. HP expertise is sometimes lacking at Board level, with that lack of understanding often resulting in an internal struggle between the Board and the PD/HP team. The fallout from those struggles is resignations, loss of leadership, the disintegration of HP programmes, and the underachievement of athletes.

From a HP perspective, it is critical also to have a functioning HP leadership group within the NGB, usually comprised of the PD, CEO, head coach and one or two others – these HP leadership groups are used to good effect in NGBs around the world. The HP leadership group functions best when they are given the autonomy by the Board to make the strategic decisions around the HP programme, reporting back on those decisions to the Board via the CEO, but without having to wait for operational activities to be ratified.

### KEY FINDINGS

- **There are many examples of good NGB governance, with the best governed Boards including independent Board members.**
- **HP knowledge can be lacking at Board level, and lack of understanding can lead to a Board/HP internal struggle.**

## Leadership - Performance Directors and Coaches

There are two critical roles within a High Performance leadership team, that of the Performance Director and the (Head) Coach. The head coach is a more difficult technical role, with technical coaching expertise specific to each sport, and as a result there is a lack of transferability from sport to sport. The PD role is one of leadership primarily, and so the role in theory can be transferred more easily from sport to sport. Ireland has some very talented PDs and coaches working within the system, but there can be issues, including a talent drain, turnover and succession planning, capability and capacity, career development, leadership struggles, lack of NGB investment in the roles, and overall lack of understanding of the roles of PD and coach.

Coaching can be misunderstood as a career choice in Ireland, with the common perception of a coach being that of a voluntary one, coaching outside of their 'actual job', and there can be limited understanding of the role of a HP coach. The Pursuit of Excellence (PEP) programme offered by the Sport Ireland Institute is the main vehicle for professional development for HP coaches in Ireland, and is generally acknowledged to have been a success. However, its capacity is restricted and it is the only instrument to upskill coaches and future PDs within the Irish system. Overall the feeling is that there are not enough skilled technical coaches within Ireland, that it is undervalued as a profession and also underpaid, there is not enough professional development, and that Ireland often needs to buy in capability expertise from abroad, with a drain back out of that expertise at the end of each Olympic cycle.

Good Performance Directors (PD) are in demand and Ireland has produced some strong PDs, and the recruitment and retention of PDs within sports is critical. There can be a big disparity between salaries of the PDs across sports, whilst many PDs often end up also coaching within their sport. The relationship between the CEO and PD is critical, and in situations where that falters the HP system

within that sport will often falter. The feeling is that the skillset of strong PDs and HP leaders does exist in Ireland, but that often we are not doing enough a nation to retain that talent within sport, or not giving PDs enough autonomy to run their programmes, or rewarding them for success. The result can be a drain of talent either out of sport, or out of the country.

### KEY FINDING

**Ireland has some very talented PDs and coaches working within the system, but there are issues, including talent drain and leadership struggles.**

## Performance Services - capability and capacity across system

The mission of the Sport Ireland Institute is to “Support Irish Sports to reach World Podiums by driving excellence in the high performance system through the delivery of world class services”. Since its inception in 2009 it has been positively perceived as having helped drive real improvement in the HP system, especially through the PEP programme (especially leadership), athlete services (especially physiotherapy, medical, S&C, physiology) and performance planning (especially review process), and is spoken of highly by athletes, HP staff and the NGBs. It is recognized as having achieved a lot with relatively little resource, with the building on Campus being an important asset.

It is also recognized that it is operating with a very limited budget and those resources are stretched too thinly across too many sports. The quality of the services provided are good, but the quantity of those services is inadequate. Areas such as performance analysis, nutrition and life skills are particularly stretched, whilst there are not enough hours of any of the services, and those hours are limited by geography (for the most part the athletes have to travel to Dublin) and capacity (unavailable at weekends or evenings). The recent departure of the Director of the Sport Ireland Institute is perceived as being a loss to the HP system.

Sports Institute Northern Ireland (SINI) has been in operation for about seven years longer than the Sport Ireland Institute, and has a greater number of staff, all permanent rather than contracted. There are a number of athletes who play all-island sports (esp. boxing, hockey, swimming, Paralympics) who access services from both Institutes or primarily from SINI. At a practitioner level there is good engagement between the two bodies, whilst at a management/strategic level there was good engagement until London 2012, but poorer relationships since then. Overall there is a view that closer cooperation between the systems would benefit the athletes and the sports, and reduce frustration around duplication of

planning. The SINI system can be perceived as being bureaucratic, whilst for others it is excellent, delivering good quality services in greater quantities than the Sport Ireland Institute. The SINI system has now moved to a four-year funding cycle. There can be issues around athletes trying to access duplicate resources from the systems, or ‘jumping ship’ from one nation to another, as well as some issues around the use of the tricolour to represent athletes from different backgrounds. Overall there is the view that if it were possible to achieve joint strategic leadership from Sport NI/SINI and SI/SII, with a focus on a limited number of sports, and better integration around service provision to those sports, that this could contribute to greater success at a world level for those sports.

### KEY FINDINGS

- **The Sport Ireland Institute is positively perceived as having helped drive real improvement in the HP system.**
- **Issues in performance services arise around lack of resource and capacity, and lack of strategic alignment between Sports Institute Northern Ireland (SINI) and the HP systems in the Republic of Ireland.**

## Monitoring/evaluation of performance

Learning from experience and continuous improvement are important elements of the performance process. In the current evaluation process, the management element of the NGBs sits with SI, and the technical element with the Sport Ireland Institute, and both together review the NGB. Monitoring of carded athletes progress and performance is undertaken on a quarterly basis, by the NGB. There is a feeling that the current system doesn't allow for a 'deep-dive' into the sports, and that the current system is one of compliance and allocation. There is a sense of entitlement amongst the sports and that there is no sanction for underperformance, with funding levels remaining consistent regardless, and that recommendations from reviews are not

implemented. Terms of reference for a three-person Performance Solutions Team have been put to the High Performance Committee of Sport Ireland and there is acceptance by all within the system that this unit, with 'teeth' would be a significant step forward in terms of monitoring of investment, and would be welcomed by all within the system.

### KEY FINDING

**The proposed three-person Performance Solutions Team would be a significant step forward in terms of monitoring of investment, and would be welcomed by all within the system.**

## International Federations

Ireland has low levels of representation on the International Sporting Federations and as a result has a low level of influence with regards to decisions made at international level, which can impact negatively. There is also the feeling that there can be a low level of knowledge of those decisions, and as a result Ireland is not making the strategic changes to its own programmes to reflect those decisions. Whilst it is recognized that it is difficult politically to be elected to the international federations, and

also that it is not the type of role that everyone enjoys, that Ireland could still do better in building its influence in this area.

### KEY FINDING

**Ireland has low levels of representation on the International Sporting Federations and could do better in building its influence in this area.**

## Facilities

The National Sports Campus is regarded as being positive for HP sport, and a good example of recommendations from previous Olympic reviews being implemented into policy, and that it will affect performances in future cycles rather than Rio. The fact of having athletes from multiple disciplines rubbing shoulders on the same site is viewed well, as is its quasi-countryside location, and the fact it has been embraced by Irish sport, with most sports on-site or seeking access. Generally,

all sporting facilities are perceived as being much improved over the last two decades, due to capital grants and capital spend, and the requirement now is for programmes within those facilities.

### KEY FINDING

**The National Sports Campus is a positive addition to the HP environment in Ireland.**

## The business model

**Objective: To review the business model for HP sport in Ireland, specifically the overall level of investment in system and the return on investment**

HP investment in 2016 was €13.4m, accounting for approximately 26% of total current Sport Ireland expenditure, with approximately 63% of the total spend on participation, and the balance on other direct costs. Over the 2013-2016 Rio cycle, a total of €31.2m was invested in HP sports programmes (plus OCI and Paralympics), while a further €6.5m was allocated over the same period to athletes under the Carding scheme. This money was shared between twenty-one sports. The smallest annual grant to a sport was €4,350, the largest €900,000.

The consensus within sport is that, while many elements are working, overall our HP business model now needs updating. There is a feeling that within the Irish system that there is a strong participation culture, as well as a culture of entitlement amongst the sports, and as a result insufficient HP resources are being shared amongst too many sports, some of whom are unlikely to be ever world-class. The view is that difficult decisions need to be made about reducing the number of sports that receive HP funding, and allowing some of those sports currently in receipt of a HP allocation to focus on participation instead. The view is that Ireland is a small country and that can lend it many advantages, including flexibility - if it were to focus resources on a reduced number of key sports, whilst having a mechanism to support outliers, it could in time be very competitive in those key sports on the world stage. The Performance Solutions Team, as referenced previously, is regarded positively as part of the solution in a refocused business model. There is also the view that more needs to be done by Corporate Ireland to support sport, greater focus should be placed by all on commercial investment, rather than purely relying on government investment.

The Carding scheme is viewed positively from the point of view of allowing HP athletes to focus entirely on their sporting career. However, it is viewed as supporting too many athletes, given the twenty-one sports involved, and often supporting athletes too late in their development, that is once they have won a European or World medal, and also not being supportive of team sports. The view is that the resources would be better focused on athletes from a smaller number of sports, and then allocated earlier to those in the development stage.

### KEY FINDING

**Insufficient HP resources are being shared amongst too many sports and athletes – the challenge for the next cycle is to update the HP business model to focus resources on a reduced number of key sports and to focus on revenue generation.**

## Successful international High Performance models

Objective: To provide commentary on successful HP systems around the world, and compare the Irish system to those

To compare systems is challenging and is not an exact science, as each country has its own peculiarities, and it is not a level playing field. Funding models are not the same in all countries, and geography and culture are different, so to compare countries is not to compare like with like. However, there are some elements of interest in each country that can be noted, and may be relevant in the Irish context. It is also worth noting that showing a 'cost per medal' analysis is a very crude and overly simplistic method, and doesn't take into account the story of the performance, and elements such as personal bests, % improvements, finalist position, etc.

High Performance Sport New Zealand was set up in 2011 and is a wholly owned subsidiary of Sport New Zealand, the government agency that oversees sport and recreation. Each has their own Board, with the Chair being shared between both. The two agencies work closely together to ensure there is an integrated pathway from community to high performance sport. They work off an eight-year strategic plan (2013-2020), with mission, vision and targets, and clearly stated investment principles and targets. Their key organizational pillar is the 'Performance and Strategic Investment Unit' which 'Optimises investment to achieve HPSNZ's medal objectives and work strategically with NSOs (NGBs) to develop world-leading high performance programmes' – this unit is akin to the proposed unit for the Irish system. The target for New Zealand was to win 14 medals at Rio – they won 18, placing them 19th on the overall medal table, and with 71 top 16 finishes. Their GDP is €142bn, vs €236bn in Ireland – they invest 0.025% of that in HP, vs 0.006% in Ireland. They invest 2.7 times the amount we do in HP, and brought home 9 times the amount of medals from Rio. HPSNZ provides investment to targeted sports and also supports specific projects with campaign investment – there are three Tier 1 targeted sports, in all of which they won gold or silver. They also have five Tier 2 sports (two of which

won medals) and three Tier 3 (one of which one a medal). The entire country in New Zealand appears to support the HP goals – reflecting on the success of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, High Performance Sport New Zealand Chair, Sir Paul Collins said: "I would like to acknowledge the Government who have been great supporters of high performance sport in New Zealand and should be commended as without their support our success would not have been possible".

Denmark, with a population similar to Ireland, came 28th on the medal table, with 15 medals. Denmark invests about 1.5 times what we do in HP – €75m over the cycle – also equating to 0.006% of GDP, their GDP being €362bn. Team Denmark is their HP unit, which is part funded by the Ministry of Culture, with strong Danish elite sport being seen as a precondition for attracting large-scale sporting events to the country. Team Denmark also has a joint marketing company with the country's NGBs, called Sport One Denmark, which generates funds for Team Denmark through the sale of sponsorships, Olympic products and television rights. Team Denmark works off a four-year strategic plan (2013-2016) and works with 31 NGBs, but tiers that support into three categories – Elite Federations, Individual Elite Federations, Development Project Federations. There are eleven sports in the Elite category, that is those with the primary HP focus. Team Denmark has six key business areas – Sportsteam, Medicine, Physiology, Communication, Facilities, Psychology.

Australia's Winning Edge is the Australian Institute of Sport's (AIS) strategy, developed after some challenging times within Australian High Performance. Whilst Australia and Ireland are too different for comparison to be meaningful, there are two points from their system worth noting. The AIS has a focus on a top-seven funded sports, and these have been required since March 2013 to adopt the principles of mandatory sports governance

or place their funding at risk. The AIS also has a cross-sport Talent ID programme called the Sports Draft – whilst primarily focused on boxing and judo, it also looks at specific sport ‘clusters’ – such as paddling, running or paralympic sports – or takes a theme-based approach by examining speed and power, target or acrobatic.

Taking into account the annual costs of the Sport Ireland Institute, plus other direct HP costs, the total investment in the four-year cycle in Ireland was in the order of €44.1m. New Zealand, with the same population as Ireland, invested circa €140m over their four-year cycle, and won 18 medals at the Rio Olympics. Denmark, again with a similar population, invested €75.6m over their four-year cycle, and won 15 medals. In simple terms, other countries are investing more money, in fewer sports, and then getting a greater medal return. By this reckoning, both our level of investment and our return on investment is poor. The overall investment would appear insufficient for Ireland to consistently compete and sustain podium performances in major competition across multiple Olympic cycles against these comparator countries.

#### KEY FINDING

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Funding models are not the same in all countries, and geography and culture are different, so to compare countries is not to compare like with like. Key elements to note across other systems are that other countries invest more than us on a per capita/GDP basis, investment tends to be to targeted sports, and the return is greater. There are some functioning cross-sport Talent ID programmes and commercial funding models to study further.

## Planning for the future

**Objective: To provide commentary on where the system needs to go and what the future can look like**

Overall sentiment is that we have come a long way and can be proud of what we have achieved to date. With evidence of sustained systemic success, and very good practice in place, now is the opportunity to refresh our HP strategy, and collectively decide what we want to achieve as a nation from a HP perspective, and be ambitious in our goals of sustaining systemic podium success. Those goals need to be collectively shared in a strategy with clear measurable targets, and which is planned out over 8 years (two cycles), with clearly stated medal targets so that expectations are clear. All participating bodies and sports need to be aligned as to the outcomes. The consensus is that Ireland needs to develop a tiered investment system, as proven in other countries, but one that is appropriate for us, with primary focus on a limited number of sports (generally between five and seven sports are identified as having top tier/podium potential, but a thorough audit would need to be undertaken first). Below the top tier there could be a development tier and special projects tier, and a mechanism for supporting exceptional talent in outlier sports. Team sports as well as individual sports need to be factored into the overall strategy. Investment needs to be against strict criteria and organizational development guidelines, including governance, with zero tolerance for deviation. Investment should be on a multi-annual basis to the sports, with an 'agreement in principle' for years two, three and four of each cycle, based on annual targets and non-negotiable drivers. With an overarching HP plan in place, we need to seek more meaningful investment from government and corporate Ireland in HP sport, and have a scale of investment sufficient for the ambition. Those greater resources should then be focused against a reduced number of podium potential /tier 1 sports.

Greater resource needs to be given to the integrated team to allow the Performance Planning Unit to be established, and to expand and amplify services, both to athletes and to coaches/PDs. An evidence-based organisation, where investment decisions are purely evidence based, should dissipate the politics in the system. The Sport Ireland Institute should be better resourced and truly delivering world-class services to world-class athletes and coaches. We have a lot of raw talent in Ireland and the SII should be resourced to develop a cross-sport Talent ID programme, and put resource behind that programme. This programme needs to have clear outcomes (i.e. sport specific/skills specific etc.) and be data-driven.

### KEY FINDINGS

- **The system is now ready for a refreshed 8-year strategy with measurable targets and clearly stated medal targets, with all participating bodies and sports aligned to the outcomes. The consensus is that Ireland needs to develop a tiered investment system, with primary focus on a reduced number of sports. Investment needs to be against strict criteria and organizational development guidelines, including governance, with zero tolerance for deviation.**
- **We need more meaningful investment from government and corporate Ireland in HP sport, and have a scale of investment sufficient for the ambition.**
- **The Sport Ireland Institute should be resourced to develop a cross-sport Talent ID programme.**

## APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

Maeve Buckley was contracted as a facilitator at the start of November 2016 to undertake an analysis of the HP system in Ireland, to be incorporated into the overall Rio review.

Using the documents and websites in Appendix 3 as preparatory documents, I conducted telephone and face-to-face interviews with all those listed in Appendix 2 on dates between November 9th and November 29th. The purpose of the interviews was to tease out in greater depth specific themes and to develop a richer understanding of how those within sport, government and the media perceive the current status of HP sport in Ireland, and their views on how it should develop.

This document is a summary of the information and views derived from those interviews.

## APPENDIX 2: LIST OF THOSE CONSULTED

The following are those with whom I spoke as part of this consultation process:

John Treacy, CEO, Sport Ireland

Paul McDermott, Director of High Performance & NGBs, Sport Ireland

Phil Moore, Director of Performance Services, Sport Ireland Institute

Gary Keegan, formerly Director of Sport Ireland Institute

Liam Sheedy, Chairman, Sport Ireland High Performance Committee

Roy Dooney, Sport Ireland High Performance Committee

Donal Og Cusack, Sport Ireland High Performance Committee

Olive Loughnane, Sport Ireland High Performance Committee

Caroline Currid, Sport Ireland High Performance Committee

Liam Harbison, Sport Ireland High Performance Committee

Stephen Martin, CEO, Olympic Council of Ireland

Shaun Ogle, Director of Performance, Sport Northern Ireland & Executive Director, Sports Institute Northern Ireland

Peter McCabe, Athlete Services Manager, Sports Institute Northern Ireland

Richard Archibald, Performance Coordinator, Sports Institute Northern Ireland

Maeve NicLochlainn, Principal Officer, Department of Transport, Tourism, & Sport

Carol O'Reilly, Assistant Principal Officer, Sports Policy and National Sports Campus division, Department of Transport, Tourism, & Sport

Sarah Doherty, Department of Transport, Tourism, & Sport

James Galvin, CEO, Federation of Irish Sport

Cliona O'Leary, Deputy Head of Sport, RTE

Johnny Watterson, Sports Writer, The Irish Times

Nancy Chillingworth, Rio HP Review facilitator

Brian McNeice, Rio HP Review facilitator

Eddie O'Sullivan, Rio HP Review facilitator

Ciaran Ward, Rio HP Review facilitator

Patricia Heberle, Rio HP Review facilitator

### APPENDIX 3: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

1. Sport Ireland Website - [www.sportireland.ie/High\\_Performance/](http://www.sportireland.ie/High_Performance/)
2. Sport Northern Ireland Website - [www.sportni.net/performance/](http://www.sportni.net/performance/)
3. Institute of Sport website - [www.instituteofsport.ie/](http://www.instituteofsport.ie/)
4. Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport website - [www.dttas.ie/sport](http://www.dttas.ie/sport)
5. London 2012 Games Debrief – authors Knight, Kavanagh and Page
6. Road to Rio and beyond – High Performance Strategy and Investment Process (Sport Ireland & Sport Ireland Institute)
7. Sport Ireland 2016 Sports Investment brochure
8. National Sports Policy Framework Public Consultation Paper (DTTAS, November 2016)
9. Australia’s Winning Edge, High Performance Strategy 2012-2022  
[www.ausport.gov.au/ais/australias\\_winning\\_edge](http://www.ausport.gov.au/ais/australias_winning_edge)
10. High Performance Sport New Zealand - <http://hpsnz.org.nz/>
11. Team Denmark - [www.teamdanmark.dk/Om-Team-Danmark.aspx](http://www.teamdanmark.dk/Om-Team-Danmark.aspx)
12. UK Sport - <https://www.uk sport.gov.uk/resources/charter>





SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND





# Athletics Ireland

Facilitator: Nancy Chillingworth

Thomas Barr finished 4th in the 400m hurdles at the Olympic Games - becoming the first Irish athlete to run under 48 seconds in this event

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Athletics Ireland (AI) qualified 17 athletes for the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. It was a successful Games for the sport from both an athlete performance and management perspective. The majority of athletes achieving or exceeding their targets, and 'consistency in the athletics support team' and 'athletics team spirit' were identified as the main positive contributors to performance and Games experience.

Athletics Ireland has good relationships with its main stakeholders and investment in the performance programme by Sport Ireland over the Rio 2016 cycle was viewed as yielding a good return. AI is currently undertaking a corporate governance review and developing a new four-year strategic plan to operate from 2017 – 2020.

Building on the success of the support team and team spirit at the Olympic Games should continue to be a priority for AI, given their perceived link to performance. Consistency within the support team and the inclusion of

more cross-discipline camps either in the lead in to competitions or throughout the cycle in conjunction with focus camps would facilitate this.

Athletics Ireland now has a well-structured high performance format developed by the current Performance Director (PD) with support from the CEO. The semi-centralised support system is developing well but clear protocols and leadership of the partnership between AI and the Sport Ireland Institute are needed to ensure its continued success and progression. Continuing with the PD model and appointing the correct successor to the role is essential for Athletics Ireland as this person will be required to drive the performance programme forward to evolve into a fully high performing system across athletes, coaches and service providers while ensuring buy in and engagement from all parties. In order to achieve this, the development and support of a high performance coaching system needs to be one of the main targets for the coming Tokyo 2020 Olympic cycle.

## INTRODUCTION

As part of its Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic review, Sport Ireland commissioned individual reviews into each of the participating sports. A panel of approved facilitators was appointed by Sport Ireland and NGBs could select from that list. The final report was approved by the Board of the NGB prior to being submitted to Sport Ireland for inclusion in the overall Rio 2016 Review.

## METHODOLOGY

The review methodology was devised by Sport Ireland and advised to John Foley, CEO, Athletics Ireland (AI). It included the following:

- Confidential on-line surveys were completed by members of the Athletics team (including people who had an important role in the preparation for the Games but were not in Rio) as part of a wider Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Review. The survey was run from the 16th – 26th September 2016. There were four separate surveys for
  - Athletes
  - Coaching/Support Staff
  - Performance Director (PD)
  - CEO/Board Members

In Athletics the surveys were issued to 17 athletes, 22 coaching/support staff, 1 Performance Director (PD) and 2 CEO/board members. There was a relatively good rate of response from 10 athletes, 14 coaching/support staff, 1 PD and 1 CEO/board member. A report detailing summary group data, qualitative analysis and indicating outliers, was compiled from the survey and made available to the facilitator for further analysis.

- The online surveys for athletes, coaching/support staff and PDs focused on a number of key areas relating to preparation and readiness, performance and Games experience. The survey for the CEO/Board Members focused on governance and oversight of the High Performance (HP) programme. The focus elements in the athlete and staff surveys included:

1. Support elements in the year leading into the Games
2. Support from relevant organisations in the year leading into the Games
3. Daily training programme
4. Performance programme effectiveness
5. Games readiness
6. Athlete performance
7. Coaching performance
8. Support team performance
9. Games organisation & logistics
10. Games experience and Post-Games experience

- Based on the surveys, a number of common themes were identified which served as the basis for the interviews which were subsequently held. Given the timeline and challenges around coordinating a group session for such a disparate group, a decision was made to interview everyone individually rather than holding focus groups. Everyone who had been issued the survey was given the option for an interview at a time of their choosing. In addition to this a number of additional people were identified by AI for inclusion. As a result, interviews were conducted either on a one-to-one basis or via phone or skype with 7 athletes, 10 coaching/support staff, the PD, CEO and 2 Board Members. Interviews were held between the 5th October – 17th October.
- In addition to this, interviews were held with key stakeholders such as Sport Ireland, the Sport Ireland Institute and the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI)
- The issues, findings and recommendations in this report are based exclusively on the information received during the process through
  - Confidential online survey
  - Interviews with key AI personnel – athletes, coaches, service providers, PD and CEO
  - Interviews with key stakeholders.

## KEY FINDINGS

| Athlete             | Event                  | Result  |
|---------------------|------------------------|---|
| Thomas Barr         | 400m Hurdles           | heat (2nd) 48.93<br>semi-final (1st) 48.39<br>final (4th) 47.97 |
| Mark English        | 800m                   | heat (3rd) 1:46.40<br>semi-final (5th) 1:45.93                  |
| Ciara Everard       | 800m                   | heat (8th) 2:07.91  |
| Ciara Mageean       | 1500m                  | heat (2nd) 4:11.51<br>semi-final (11th) 4:08.07                 |
| Sara Treacy         | 3000m Steeplechase     | heat (12th) 9:46.24<br>final (17th) 9:52.70                     |
| Kerry O'Flaherty    | 3000m Steeplechase     | heat (14th) 9:45.35   |
| Michelle Finn       | 3000m Steeplechase     | heat (11th) 9:49.45   |
| Paul Pollock        | Marathon               | 32nd 2:16:24  |
| Kevin Seaward       | Marathon               | 64th 2:20:06  |
| Mick Clohisey       | Marathon               | 103rd 2:26:34   |
| Fionnuala McCormack | Marathon               | 20th 2:31:22  |
| Lizzie Lee          | Marathon               | 57th 2:39:57  |
| Breege Connolly     | Marathon               | 76th 2:44:41  |
| Alex Wright         | 20km Walk<br>50km Walk | 46th 1:25:25<br>DNF   |
| Robert Heffernan    | 50km Walk              | 6th 3:43:55   |
| Brendan Boyce       | 50km Walk              | 19th 3:53:59  |
| Tori Pena           | Pole Vault             | Group B (14th) 4.30m  |

17 athletes competed at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. The original target was to qualify 20 athletes but this included a 4 x 400m men's relay team who narrowly missed out on qualification. Rio was a successful Games overall for Athletics Ireland (AI) with the majority of athletes achieving or exceeding their targets. AI was targeting an increase in athletes achieving semi-finals or finals and this was achieved including the following results; a fourth place finish for Thomas Barr in the 400m hurdles, sixth for Rob Heffernan in the 50km walk, Sara Treacy progressing to the final and Mark English and Ciara Mageean to the semi-finals.

Preparations for the Games and holding camp were smooth with communications between AI and the OCI working effectively. There was some confusion around camp equipment with AI eventually arranging to transport it themselves. The holding camp in Uberlandia was well regarded by athletes and staff in terms of set up, accommodation, food and professionalism of the support staff running it. There were a few comments from athletes

about the fact that the humidity levels were different to Rio and that the security requirement to have police escorts was a bit restrictive but overall they were still positive about the camp and the fact that it helped to foster a sense of 'team' amongst the athletics team who attended which went on to contribute positively to performance at the Games.

The most frequently cited factor by athletes and staff, which positively impacted on performance, was the consistency of the AI support team at the Games. AI received adequate accreditations from the OCI to effectively support all the team's needs in-sport without any requirement to use the wider OCI support services in the village. This consistency throughout the lead in to the Games through other championships meant that the athletes had trust in their support team and felt they could focus on themselves and their own performance with confidence. There was also good communication within the athletics team through the use of a 'WhatsApp' group. Some concern has been voiced that the consistency

and team ethos which has been built up could be lost if there are too many changes in personnel post Games.

It was felt more consideration could have been given to rooming requirements once athletes had finished competing. There was observations that some athletes in other sports were in single rooms despite being finished, while other athletes still competing were rooming with those who had finished competing. In at least one case, this had a direct impact on performance. There was also some suggestion that athletes competing at the end of the Games should have delayed their entry to the village by longer.

There was consensus that there were lots of issues with the Games themselves from a Rio Organising Committee (ROCOG) perspective such as the village being very basic and not very athlete friendly, problems with theft and transport issues. It was understood that these were outside the control of either AI or OCI. It was felt that the OCI could have done more to have made the Irish team accommodation homelier and welcoming. The team room was quite small and things such as small fridges in the accommodation or a coffee machine and kettle in the team room would have been welcomed. The OCI commented that their main focus was on working to make the accommodation habitable before the team arrived due to problems with ROCOG. There were two options for the team room but the larger one was allocated to the medical team on performance grounds.

The ratings of post Games experience varied hugely amongst the athletes with an average rating of 55 out of 100 and a wide spread across the team. Those athletes who had engaged with the Sport Ireland Institute in relation to post Games planning commented that support provided by Eoin Rheinisch was very good but felt that this could have been improved further by Eoin being in Rio to speak to athletes immediately post competition. In addition, it was felt that a direct personal contact, such as a phone call, from AI would have been useful to deal with the post Games period.

There has been some suggestion that the selection criteria needs to be further simplified to ensure full understanding by athletes. Some athletes who were sure they had met all the necessary criteria were concerned about their actual selection until it was announced. Ultimately there was one selection appeal which was financially very costly for AI and stressful for the athletes involved. The appeal was unsuccessful and the decision of the selection committee was upheld. The inclusion of a robust “fitness to perform” criterion was also proposed while it is acknowledged that this is can be a challenging one to implement.

## PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

The change in culture from a very individualised sport to a more structured systemic performance culture was identified as one of the main recommendations following the 2012 London Olympic Games. There is evidence that the PD has effected a lot of change in this space despite significant resistance initially from some areas. Athletics Ireland now has clear policies and expected standards across disciplines. These performance trajectory metrics and in some cases increased standards have seen an increase in performances as athletes step up to achieve qualification standards set higher than international standards for some competitions. The performance targets over the cycle were to achieve 24 Olympic, World, European and European Youth medals. The programme achieved this overall, winning 25 medals, the majority of which were achieved at European and European Youth championships.

Athletics was the first sport to whom Sport Ireland transferred control of carding and this is seen as a positive move. It is acknowledged that the development of a system of financial support that is consistent across many disciplines is a challenge but the criteria are clear and accessible through the HP section of the AI website. Changes to the criteria have meant that direct financial support to athletes at the emerging talent level has decreased and support packages include access to services at the Sport Ireland Institute hub, however there may a benefit in reducing the number of those

in receipt of small direct financial investment further. There is an argument that, in order to continue with the development of a semi-centralised high performance programme and system, the money that is currently being issued to some athletes may be better invested in a programme. Athletes could then have access to, for example, a number of 1 day camps at Sport Ireland Institute that would include their personal coaches, lead coaches, and support service programme. This would also help to foster the sense of being part of the Athletics Ireland team which the athletes identified as being important to experience at a much younger age.

One area of improvement over the Rio Olympic cycle has been the further development of the AI support services hub in the Sport Ireland Institute. This is the result of a partnership between AI and the Sport Ireland Institute where AI employ some providers to work alongside the Sport Ireland Institute team as well as buying additional time from Sport Ireland Institute providers. The centralised hub allows AI to provide services to more AI athletes (including those with potential to qualify and succeed but who fall outside carding)

While the team in principle works well, there is a need for very clear leadership of the overall team in terms of protocol and lines of management and communication as there is some confusion on this within the service providers. As mentioned earlier, the consistency of support across AI staff and service providers was considered to have a positive impact on performance and the need to retain this into the next cycle is key. There were positive comments from both athletes and staff specifically regarding Gillian Brosnan and she may be the key to ensuring continuity within this team with a more direct leadership role.

With a sport as varied and individual as athletics there is a balancing act to support all athletes with the resources that are available. There are still some complaints from athletes that the resources are centred around a Dublin hub. However, there are fewer complaints compared to previously. It is possible that, as the new system has evolved, athletes who

have been developed within it will view it more favourably and accept that it is part of a system of support. That said, AI is continuing to work to provide individual athletes with service in their own locality where it is considered necessary on a case-by case basis and there was evidence of this happening during the Rio cycle with providers travelling to provide support at athletes' personal programmes. Continued work on this hub in terms of using it as a base for development athlete camps and coach development combined with clear leadership of the combined support team should see it become the most attractive option of support for potential HP athletes. At present there are still some issues with athlete and coach engagement with the services. Using existing athletes as advocates and role models will also help with athlete engagement. Coach engagement and development will be further discussed later in this report.

There needs to be very clear tracking of athletes who are likely to qualify for the Olympic Games and a structure of how to adequately support them. As the system progresses, these athletes are more likely to already be part of the established programme but it is important to track potential outliers as well. Out of the 17 athletes who competed in Rio, only 5 were targeted within the AI High Performance Strategy 2013–2016. For an athlete operating independently, the experience of the Olympic Games can be even more of a shock so fostering a sense of team with them in the lead in and working on their engagement with Games preparation programmes such as Sport Ireland Institute workshops is particularly important.

AI is also investigating more formal links in terms of scholarships and coaching support with certain third level institutions with established athletics programmes. This is currently at an early stage of development as there are concerns around the personnel resource required to manage these relationships from within AI. In principle it would appear to be positive proposal with the potential to establish satellite support hubs in those colleges.

The PD conducted considerable work on developing a talent pipeline funnel. There is now a clear pathway and evidence of athletes progressing through it but there is some perception that it may be overly performance outcome focused and could be changed to better serve a long term athlete development model. Currently coaches may feel that they are recognised for athlete performances at junior championships. Therefore, a significant change in focus is required to ensure coaches are supported and recognised for following LTAD practices.

Athletics Ireland has a clear coaching pathway in terms of levels of accreditation but coach development emerged as one of the main areas for change and improvement in the review. The sport needs a way of identifying coaches who have the potential to be truly world class and then provide the support to enable them to succeed. A step in the right direction has been made with the establishment of the coaching networks in each area but the system needs a framework to ensure consistency of coach support across the disciplines. At present there are six national event coordinators but it may be more effective to have a performance coaching lead in each area. These roles would be responsible for coach mentoring and development of the network within a clear framework to ensure consistency across disciplines. The network can then be effectively used to achieve things such as the following:

- Workshops delivered by world experts in specific area
- Peer support and shared learning including mentoring
- Identifying coaches who are passionate and driven to develop and succeed
- Improve coach understanding of multi-disciplinary team approach and the AI HP system
- Increase familiarity with support services team

The networks can give AI an opportunity to recognise the good work of specific coaches and establish a CPD element to complement the current coach pathway. A thorough review and proposal for HP coaching in outside the scope of this review but it is something that

should be considered by AI. This will help design a programme that is effective in developing and recognising talented coaches who can be retained within the system.

Athletics in Ireland is a sport that relies heavily on a volunteer coaching base. Establishing a high performance coaching community through further coach recognition and development will assist AI with the identification of suitable coaches for potential athletes at a much younger level. This will help avoid talented athletes depending on coaches who they may have outgrown. Getting to a stage where the coach section of the website could be used to recognise coaching achievements and allow potential athletes to search for AI approved HP coaches could be a potential goal once there is a significant base of high performance coaches operating within the AI HP system.

There was a sense amongst athletes and staff that there are now fewer training camps than previously and this is seen as an area of opportunity. Obviously there are some specific requirements for different disciplines such as increased altitude training but multi-discipline camps are viewed positively by both athletes and coaches as a means of shared learning, fostering team identity and efficient allocation of support services.

## MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

Athletics Ireland is quite complex in terms of its governance of high performance in that there is a management and reporting link from the PD through the CEO to the Board but there is also a High Performance Committee (HPC) to whom the PD has a reporting responsibility. The Chairperson of the HPC sits on the Board of AI. At the time of this report, AI is in the process of a full governance review along with the development of a new four-year strategic plan which will include high performance. Work has been on-going in relation to the professionalization of the organisation and the existing Memorandum and Articles does not reflect the current working relationships between the board, committees and staff.

Whilst there is a recognition and acceptance that high performance must be run by professionals with the committee overseeing the area, it is important that this is reflected in the memorandum and articles of association. There is a sense within the HPC that while the PD is very knowledgeable, he needs to engage with the committee members more proactively recognising the experience and knowledge on the committee. Communication from the PD to the committee has not been optimal and this needs to be resolved if the HPC is to truly advocate on behalf of high performance in the wider AI governance arena. At present there is also a Coaching Committee. While the Chairperson of the Coaching Committee now sits on the HPC (since mid-2016) and vice versa, the Coaching Committee itself sits within Development. There does not seem to be a clear link between Coaching and High Performance and this is an area that should be carefully considered in the on-going governance review to ensure a joined up approach to high performance coaching.

The investment strategy targets events and athletes who have potential to succeed at Olympic, World and European Championships as well as establishing a performance programme that supports an athlete development framework. The costs associated with international competition are significant before you even consider the performance programme itself. It is essential to have a very strong strategy in terms of which international competitions are being targeted and why. Increasing the national standards required for selection for certain events has been effective and it is important that competitions targeted for programme investment fit clearly on a performance pathway. This is most important at the junior/development level where it may mean forgoing medals at certain competitions for longer term athlete career development. There was disappointment with the men's 4 x 400m missing out on qualification considering the investment in the programme. Athletics Ireland's strategy focused primarily on relays and endurance and walks events. There was some comment that endurance and walks athletes felt they were operating outside of the HP system although the majority of athletes at the Games were from those disciplines.

The more centralised system of support that has been established under the current PD should allow for more efficient investment in programme areas rather than having so many individual athlete set ups. As identified above, investing in programmes and coach education and support at a junior level can help with setting good performance behaviours and promotion of the AI performance system as those athletes developing within the system mature.

The review identified some communication issues between the PD and athletes. There appears to be significant improvement from the London 2012 review but there was still evidence that the interpersonal side of the role needs to be improved. Some of this criticism may be due to a lack of understanding of the PD's role. Clarity on the role and setting clear expectations for athletes is crucial. During the course of this review, the PD announced that he was stepping down from his position. It is important that an improved communication agenda in the PD role is prioritized.

The current PD conducted a significant amount of work around policies and structures for high performance and it is acknowledged that he has created a strong foundation for his successor to progress. The HP website is seen as a useful reference point for athletes checking on criteria, standards and policies but it could be made more user friendly and appealing to a demographic with an average athlete age profile. It is critical that AI continues with the PD model and appoints someone with the knowledge and drive to continue with the performance systems approach combined with excellent interpersonal communication skills. In order to successfully progress the coach development model, it is important that the PD does not coach to avoid potential conflict with personal coaches and any confusion of roles. A system as complex as athletics requires a performance systems perspective in the PD role.

A structured communication strategy needs to be put in place for high performance to give athletes some expectation around their contact with the PD and/or other performance leads.

With such a spread of athletes, it is recognised that this may not always be face-to-face but it should include a regular phone check in for athletes who are likely qualifiers, as well as some contact through home programme visits where appropriate to build and strengthen relationships within the AI HP system. At present athletes feel that they submit their carding applications with little constructive feedback from or discussion with the PD.

Communication by athletes has improved over the course of the Rio cycle but there are still some cases of athletes not reporting responsibly or accurately on the NGB and support they receive either within the system or externally to the media. On-going athlete education in this regard is always needed.

The annual carding application is used as a review tool by the PD but there is currently no formal debrief programme throughout the cycle. It is likely that individual coaches conduct their own post event debriefs with athletes but incorporating a post Championships debrief system from a programme perspective would be a useful tool for athletes and staff to ensure continued progression and learning.

## STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships between AI and its key stakeholders are positive. Sport Ireland views that athletics provided a good return on investment from the Rio Olympic Games. In addition, operationally there is an effective relationship between the two organizations, both at CEO and PD level. Sport Ireland strongly supports the PD model and would like to see it continued within AI. Sport Ireland also welcomes the on-going corporate governance review undertaken by AI.

As previously referenced, the relationship Sport Ireland Institute and AI operates mainly through the joint services hub. As outlined, leadership of this partnership group needs to be clearly defined. The HP link between AI and Sport Ireland Institute is a positive one. The AI staff have helped maintain this partnership by frequently basing themselves at Sport Ireland Institute.

The Olympic Council of Ireland reported that Athletics Ireland was the best NGB to work with, in terms of preparation for the Games, as communication between the organizations was quick and effective.

## SUMMARY

In summary, the Rio 2016 Olympic Games were successful for Athletics Ireland, from both a performance and management perspective, with a true sense of 'team' across athletes and staff. Significant changes occurred within high performance athletics in Ireland over the course of the Rio cycle. In particular, AI initiated a more structured overall approach, implementation of the performance services hub in partnership with Sport Ireland Institute, the management of athlete carding support, and development of clear policies and standards for athlete performance. These changes were driven by the PD, and supported by the CEO, who has now left a strong foundation for his successor to drive forward. The correct appointment to this role is crucial for AI to ensure continuation of the programme. The challenge for the Tokyo cycle is to focus on coach development and support. This is to ensure the high performance programme has full engagement from athletes and individual coaches while being led centrally through the PD.

## ATHLETICS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Retain the PD model and appoint as soon as possible to drive the performance programme forward and avoid the development of a vacuum.
2. Continue with and build on the HP framework set up by the current PD. This framework needs time and careful management to reach its full potential and become a truly high performing system across all areas.
3. Continue to target disciplines which have been identified as most likely to yield medals for Ireland at a high performance level.
4. Conduct a review of coaching which will lead to the development of a strong high performance coaching framework building on the network concept.
  - Drive a coach development and mentoring agenda with a lead person in each discipline who will drive their area within the overall framework. This person should have the expertise to mentor and facilitate elite coach development rather than directly coaching themselves.
  - Create a CPD element with a strong recognition system (e.g. credits) for engagement with the Coaching Network.
  - Update the coaching section of the website as part of the new coaching framework where coaches' achievements are recognised and athletes can search for high performance coaches in specific disciplines and locations.
5. Develop a clear communication structure for the PD position and HP Lead Team including phone contact and home programme visits so that athletes have clear expectations of their interaction with the PD and other members of the HP Team.
6. Continue with providing consistency of support to athletes at camps and championships.
7. Maintain and expand the services hub at the Sport Ireland Institute
  - Agree service level agreements with targeted service providers as early as possible to ensure continuity of service to athletes.
  - Work with the Sport Ireland Institute to agree protocols and leadership of the joint services group
  - Use the hub as a base for development one day camps to instil early familiarity and positive athlete behaviours
  - Host coach network sessions at the Sport Ireland Institute (when appropriate) to build familiarity and facilitate engagement
8. Instigate a training camps programme throughout the cycle targeting athletes who are likely to qualify for the Games. Where possible (different event demands permitting) operate this on a multi-discipline basis to strengthen athlete and coach engagement, sense of belonging and maximise delivery of support services.
9. Implement a post Championships debrief plan designed to establish a culture of on-going review from an individual and programme perspective.
10. Retain the HP website as a reference tool for athletes but revamp to make it more attractive and user friendly to athletes.
11. Consider reviewing carding allocations at the Emerging Talent level to focus more on performance testing rather than performance outcomes. Provide support to athletes achieving the standards through investing in one day camps for athletes and coaches or other programme elements rather than small allocations of direct financial support to a large number of athletes.
12. Review Memorandum and Articles ensuring that they reflect the current professionalism and operation of the organisation.
13. Through the course of the on-going governance review consider the position of the Coaching Committee and its relationship with HP.

## ATHLETICS RECOMMENDATIONS CONTD.

### Non-Athletics specific recommendations:

1. Include an athlete lifestyle support practitioner as part of the Tokyo 2020 team to begin the post Games support immediately after competition. Ideally this person should be involved in the programme with the majority of athletes pre Games.
2. Ensure the Olympic Games rooming strategy includes a cross sport agreement on moving people to support those athletes who are competing later in the competition programme.



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND



# Badminton Ireland



Facilitator: Maeve Buckley

## Scott Evans is the first Irish badminton player to qualify for the last 16 at the Olympic Games

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Badminton Ireland is a small governing body but one that shows good leadership skills at the top of the organisation. Badminton athletes are getting higher quality training opportunities more often and have really improved as a result. The system that has been put in place is solid, and is adapting and responding to the higher intensity of the programme. Those involved in badminton at administration / coaching / athlete level see a good support structure around them and value that, as well as the clarity of the pathway and goals. The National Training Centre at Marino has had a huge cultural impact. There appears to be good depth to the programme, with a number of very talented emerging players with strong potential.

Overall Badminton Ireland has done very well in putting together a comprehensive support team around their athletes. They are good at engaging with the support services around them, and the centralised programme is working and they have talented development players. The sparring programme that has been put in place over this cycle appears to have been extremely effective, with all those involved in it rating it extremely highly. The High Performance Group has been very positive for the organisation, with the workload being

shared, and good working relationships and clarity of purpose feeding out from this group across the organisation. The video analysis and performance tools used over this cycle have assisted greatly the work of the coaches and players. It is very clear on the website how to get into the talent programme, while the six regional academies feed effectively into the national centre, and there are strong coaches out at a regional as well as a national level.

That said, there is still more to work on. The stress of competition and travel plays heavily on badminton athletes, and due to travel or overseas location they often have little time or money to engage with the support services available. The previous national coach pushed the players too hard at times – while great to have ambition, it needs to be tempered with realism. Badminton Ireland needs to define what they are aiming for at the Olympics over the next cycles. They should also work on putting in place career planning for their coaches and staff, and seek to avoid perceive changes mid-cycle to programmes and roles. Resources are stretched and Badminton Ireland could seek to expand those resources through effective external partnerships. Overall Badminton Ireland does a very effective job with limited resources.

## PREPARATION AND READINESS FOR THE GAMES

### Performance Targets

The original performance target of Badminton Ireland for Rio 2016 had been threefold:

1. Qualify Chloe Magee in ladies singles
2. Qualify Scott Evans in men's singles
3. Qualify Sam Magee and Chloe Magee in mixed doubles

In 2015 the decision was made to pull Sam & Chloe from the mixed doubles as they had to be ranked under 23rd for qualification, and it seemed unlikely that this would be achieved. Further attempts to achieve it were likely also to undermine Chloe's chances of individual qualification. This was a very challenging decision for Badminton Ireland and the athletes involved to make, and the support of the OCI was appreciated in that process.

Individual preparation programmes were put in place for Scott and Chloe, with Scott playing Super League and Chloe undertaking second tier tournaments that she had a good chance of winning. Overall in their Olympic cycles Scott and Chloe have had programmes very much cut to them an individual, whereas the earlier programme for the juniors is now more planned.

### Training Camps and Training Environment

Prior to Rio, both athletes did training camps and sparring overseas in the UK (with GB and other players), France (hosted by French governing body) and Scotland. This was a noted improvement on 2012 where a training camp did take place at the Lensbury, but lacked sufficient or appropriate players. Another very significant improvement on the previous cycle was that in the interim, Badminton Ireland has developed a National Training Centre (NTC) at Marino. That centre is an accredited Badminton Europe facility so can therefore host and attract players for sparring. This has been a game changer for Badminton Ireland. In the build-up to Rio, two players from Malaysia were brought in, as well as players from Sweden, Scotland, Norway, amongst other countries, to spar with. Some of the Sport Ireland High-Performance Grant has been invested in sparring.

Being able to undertake sparring in Dublin was perceived by both athletes as very positive. For Chloe, who is Ireland based, it means having to undertake less overseas travel to training camps as she can now undertake significant world-level training at home. For a sport with a very gruelling international travel schedule this is significant, and means also that she can avail of support services (such as those from the Sport Ireland Institute) simultaneously, and without having to continuously break and reschedule those services. Overall within the organisation, having sparring in the NTC in Dublin is perceived as having been very successful and making a big difference, and something they would ideally invest more in. However, it is also worth noting that given that one of the athletes is based overseas, having sparring in Ireland is of limited usage to him, and also the quality available is not as good as that in Denmark.

### Financial Support

Lack of sufficient financial support was cited as a factor that limited games preparation to an extent. While there was increased access to sparring, more is still needed, and of higher quality. Lack of overall funding was also cited as problematic in terms of the tournament schedule, as in many instances there were insufficient funds to allow a coach to travel to the tournaments, something in which Ireland is often an outlier. Overall the financial support available through the carding system was deemed as insufficient to cover life costs, and to purchase the level of support services required (physio etc.), leaving athletes at times in the position of needing to work part-time. The point was also made that ideally financial support through the carding system would be made to emerging players, as it is in other countries. This would allow them to focus fully on training and give them a far greater chance of ultimate Games success, in allowing them access to international tournaments now, and thus easing their transition from junior to senior level.

### External Organisation Support

In terms of support services, the Sport Ireland Institute was perceived as having been of major assistance. Kate Kirby assisted a lot on the sports psychology side, while the other services

provided such as testing, physio and nutrition were also highly rated.

### **Performance Analysis**

Badminton Ireland have done performance analysis internally, and this has been a game-changer for them in terms of preparation. Ideally they would like to purchase the software properly, as currently they are using an external license. The structure of the High Performance Group also assisted to a great extent the preparation for the games, in providing clarity of purpose for all in the greater team. (This group was comprised of the CEO, Coaching Manager, HP Director and National Coach, and met/spoke weekly).

### **Athlete Readiness**

In terms of athlete readiness for the Games, most people agreed that they were physically and technically/tactically ready, but with some disagreement on whether they were mentally ready. The fact that both players have had multiple Games experience was a big help, as was the number of big tournaments and matches they already competed in (and sometimes won), and both players had a good level of mental toughness. The sparring and training camps undertaken were perceived as positive from the point of view of readiness, as was the video analysis.

However, the pressure from attempting to qualify for the mixed doubles was perceived as having a negative impact on readiness to compete, as it resulted in a much later qualification, while the intense tournament schedule also took its toll in terms of recovery time around training and overall travel fatigue. It also impacted on the amount of time available to work with the support services.

### **Communication**

There was an issue around clarity of roles, and some difficulty with changing roles within the HP team, and a lack of clarity on who was coaching lead and who was performance lead. At times also there appears to have been a logistical disconnect between the HP Director being based overseas, and the task of keeping players and staff in line with the targets being set. The fact of the national coach being of a slightly different cultural mindset and differing training style is likely to have also exacerbated

this role confusion. The change of tack in terms of qualification meant that balancing the tournament schedule and the recovery needs of Chloe was challenging, while the mixture of nationalities and geographic location of the HP team at times lead to a lack of clarity. It is worth noting that all mentioned that the respect and trust between players and staff was good.

## **GAMES PERFORMANCE**

Overall the collective view of the Badminton Ireland performance at Rio 2016 was positive, and better than initial expectations. Both athletes felt that they had learned a lot from the two previous Olympic experiences that helped them in Rio. Chloe was unlucky with her draw, which was tough. Scott had a mixed draw, and had a great first win, as well as a superb second match in a relatively hostile environment, and overcame all expectations in getting through to the knockout stages, and finishing with an official placing of 9th. There were two accreditations which allowed for both the HP Director (Tom Reidy) and HP Coach (Irwansyah) to go to Rio to support the players. Both players had very different preparations going into the Games, with Scott working with Tom Reidy (or independently) and Chloe with Irwansyah.

Chloe was disappointed with the performance. She felt overtrained at the Games, and having been trained in an Asian style, rather than one more suited to a European physiology. However, there was a positive working relationship between Chloe and the HP Coach (Irwansyah). Overall the entire experience was rated as being okay however, with a good build-up, training plan, camps, etc.

Scott overall was very happy with Rio and, was very happy with both the results achieved and the preparation. Tom Reidy, the HP Director, is very trusted by Scott and worked on his Olympic programme with him. It was agreed with the HP Coach Irwansyah that HP Director Tom would coach Scott at Olympics, and so the crucial element of having a trusted person behind the court was present and relevant for Scott, and probably added to overall performance.

From the point of view of support services, the athletes were very satisfied on site, particularly citing twice-daily physio as assisting greatly. Having greater access to a sports psychologist and qualifying earlier, would have helped games performance, as would having greater access to treatments for overseas athletes. Certain elements of the games environment could have been better also, such as a better relaxation area for Irish athletes in the village (see next section), and this could possibly have affected performance.

### GAMES EXPERIENCE

The overall view on the Rio experience was mixed.

From an arrival/logistical point of view the flights were not great – the athletes were flown on indirect flights and arrived at 5am, poor for body clock and assimilation.

The general village area was perceived as not being great, with elements like food, toilets, bedding etc. not of a high standard, and London 2012 being better in that regard. Overall it was acceptable however.

The OCI were perceived as doing a great job, and despite reported negativity outside the Olympic village, all the support staff were really helpful. In London 2012 and Beijing 2008 each apartment had a TV, so the athletes never really spoke to the other athletes. In Rio as there were no TVs in the apartments, the athletes went often to the common room next to the physio room. This was perceived as making a big difference, and creating more of a team feel. The athletes went and supported each other at their matches. In an environment where every athlete has an individual purpose, having a team vibe is very important, and particularly in a small nation team like that of Ireland. The area in the village where the Irish stayed had no particular Irish decoration apart from a flag, but did have a team vibe.

However, it was pointed out that a dedicated Team Ireland social room is needed for coaches, physios and athletes, and was not available.

The New Balance team clothing was not suitable for badminton performance. While the leisure gear was okay they performance gear was not right. The New Balance representative did not bring the clothing for the athletes to try on at the initial meeting to make sure of the fit, specifically for lunging. The gear was oversized and problematic for Chloe, who used her own shorts. The athlete on the court needs to be fully comfortable in their gear, and that was not the case in this instance. The gear needs to be right before going, and this is a problem that continues to persist across three Olympic cycles despite feedback (also the case in Beijing and London). In Scott's case New Balance sent three sizes to choose from, so there was less of an issue.

The return home post-Olympics is always very challenging mentally with media requests, being recognised in the street, etc. It is recognised that there is some support there, with the Sport Ireland Institute getting in touch with all the athletes. Given the different types of athletes, at differing stages of their careers, a one fits all approach wouldn't work in terms of post-Olympics support, but post-Olympics phone calls and meetings are deemed as being very important. Overall having a better plan for when the athletes land back in Dublin could be improved.

### STRATEGIC REFLECTIONS ON THE HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME

#### NGB structure

The NGB has been significantly restructured over the last six years and during the course of the last Olympic cycle. The entry of a new Chairman at around that time facilitated that process, as well as two progressive CEOs. Whereas the previous focus was on individuals, Badminton Ireland have now have put in place a programme based model. The programme is structured around goals, accessibility (financially and geographically) and the removal of barriers around disability. Programme measurements are in place around effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability. These structural improvements over the last four years have resulted in Badminton Ireland being positioned in the top three in Europe for its children's programme, and with strong

Masters and Paralympic programmes.

### **Finances**

Over the course of the last six years Badminton Ireland has gone from a position of deficit to one of positive budgets. There is an improved allocation for attending tournaments, which has assisted, however is still not where those involved would like it to be. It would be preferable for a coach to attend all tournaments with players, while for the players themselves money worries are an issue, which at times can hamper performance. The tournament schedule is expensive, while also ideally Badminton Ireland would have greater funds to spend on treatments and services both at home and overseas, as well as greater funds to spend on sparring and video analysis.

### **HP Group**

For the last four years Badminton Ireland have had a HP group, comprised of the CEO, HP Director, Coaching Manager, National Coach/ Development Manager. This group met/spoke weekly and made decisions together, with the HP Director reporting into group, but also allowed to get on with his role. The HP Director had the final decision regarding money and sparring. This work group is cited by all as having been a significant driver in the overall programme, giving stability, clarity of purpose from the top, and a strong team ethic. It is a measure of the success and the stability of the group that despite two team member changes since Rio the group will continue to function.

### **National Training Centre**

Over the course of the last cycle Badminton Ireland moved from a HP facility in Baldoyle to a new National Training Centre (NTC) in the Institute of Education in Marino. The new NTC provides accommodation and permanent access for the athletes and is a significant factor in reducing drop-off or the likelihood of players moving overseas. It is perceived by all as working very well. In addition to its present status as Badminton Europe accredited performance centre, BI are presently tendering for a single BE Centre to be based in Dublin.

### **Player pathway and Talent ID**

The structure of Badminton Ireland is that of clubs at a national level feeding into six regional 'Below Talent' cells. Each cell has a level 2

coach paid for by Badminton Ireland, who receive a training schedule each week from Dan Magee. The best of the emerging talent from the six cells is put forward into the 'Talent Squad' based at the National Training Centre. The players in that squad tend to be in the 15-18 age group, and are all still in school and mostly train twice daily in Marino. Entry to that squad is based on criteria, which are published and transparent to all, including parents. There are regular reviews of those on the programme to ensure that the standards are being met. The intention is to always keep this group small, but with more budget ideally offer them more opportunities such as access to services, tournament opportunities and sparring. Above the Talent Squad are two prospective Olympians and two Olympians, all full-time athletes. The focus is on medallists, rather than the national team, and players understand the difference between an Ireland player and a medal player/world stage player.

### **Coaching**

Badminton Ireland over the last years took on the Badminton World Federation coaching model as approved by Coaching Ireland. They now have Level 1 and Level 2 coaches in situ throughout the country, with the next goal that of Level 3 and a coaching tutor course. They now have a standardised programme and curriculum throughout the country. Overall the view of the coaching set-up is that Badminton Ireland are doing a good job with the resources they have, with successes at the development stage and talent ID stage and a positive view of the future. The coaching system attracts both foreign sparring players who wish to benefit, plus coaches from Europe who wish to complete their level 1&2 BWF courses in Ireland.

### **Services**

Badminton Ireland now accesses the services of the Sport Ireland Institute on a weekly basis, and perceives the support to have been very helpful and the open supportive relationship very positive. S&C, physio, nutrition and psychology have all been very helpful, as has the fact of the close proximity of the offices. Ideally they would access to an even greater extent the S+C and testing services. The Pursuit of Excellence programme and the dialogue it creates between coaches is perceived as having been a massive support for both London and Rio.

Dan Magee has completed the PEP programme and, being highly regarded within it, has been asked to stay on.

Support from the OCI only kicks in one in every four years, but is perceived as positive both on the ground in Rio, and in advance in terms of the solidarity grant. Sports Institute of Northern Ireland has no direct input, only via Ulster Badminton. Sport Ireland has been very supportive, with advantages derived from being based on Campus with the other NGBs and the benefit of a transparent carding system. However, it was noted that an annual cycle is detrimental to progress, and a four-year cycle would be better, such as that in Great Britain. Coaching Ireland have also supported Badminton Ireland with a tutor course during this cycle.

### NGB GOVERNANCE OF HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME

#### Board

The Board is perceived as being stable and cohesive and aligned with the aims of the HP programme. It is comprised of representation from the four provinces, along with Chairperson, Treasurer, CEO and an independent member. The Chairperson and Treasurer are elected at AGM, while there are policies around rotation, with Board members allowed to do a two-year term, either two or three times. The Board is currently undertaking to implement the Governance Code. Board members get a code of ethics and do informal training. There is an external auditor to the Board.

High Performance is always on the agenda at the monthly Board meeting, with the CEO reporting to the Board on HP. The HP programme makes it clear to Board what the goals and the outcomes are. Some Board members have a better understanding than others, but overall they understand and value the profile it brings to the sport. The Board allow Badminton Ireland money to be spent on HP, as well as the designated HP allocation, and are very supportive. The Chairman has a strong understanding of HP, and there is an excellent rapport between the Chairman and the CEO, with the CEO feeling fully supported

in his role. This clarity of purpose and positive team spirit from the top is felt throughout the organisation.

At times the Board is perceived as being political, and it is noted that there is no discussion of HP at the AGM, while the athletes themselves are quite removed from the Board. Ideally from a governance perspective, management and Board would prefer to work around 4 year funded Olympic plan, given that it takes a lot of time to do it annually from governance and planning point of view, and most other countries work on a four-year cycle. Relations with the Badminton World Federation are strong, with BI being one of the oldest federations in the world, and now bidding for the National Sports Campus to become a Badminton Europe base.

#### Training/recruitment/induction/succession

New recruits undertake an induction at the start, with written roles and responsibilities and an informal introduction process. There are staff members' sessions with all, and all are encouraged to do Sport Ireland training courses. In terms of staff investment, Badminton Ireland are paying for the Masters for a team member. There is a feeling that the departure of the existing HP Director will leave a hole. There is also positivity around the new National HP coach and what he is likely to bring to the role in terms of processes, as well as his experiences from the GB system. Overall there is a feeling that it would be good to have better career opportunities within Badminton Ireland and better progression plans for existing staff. There is good succession in place, with no major surprises in the changeover of CEO during the last cycle and current changes on the HP group.

#### Reviews/Processes/Lessons learned

There is a weekly review within the HP group, while at a staff level all do annual appraisals with the CEO, who in turn conducts one with the Chair. All have KPIs and target based roles, with bonuses based on KPIs. There is a performance management system in place.

Selection criteria for players is monitored weekly, with a weekly player and coaching plan, whilst players tournament progress is monitored on an ongoing basis. The HP and

Talent Squad have 10 major tournaments per annum, with the coach + PD undertaking reviews on site, while for minor tournaments the coach undertakes the review, or there is video analysis, the results of which are integrated into the plan. Players do a sit-down twice a year and a 360 profile with the performance lead, looking at tactical, physical, fitness, etc. This also happens at underage level and determines if the player stays on the programme.

There was no debrief post-Olympics with Irwansyah, as his contract ended so quickly (with holidays factored in). The Performance Director undertook a debrief post-Olympics with the players.

## BADMINTON RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, Badminton Ireland has built a solid programme and structure, with the challenge now being to maintain that and keep the bar set high, whilst also keeping the talent coming through.

The following are my recommendations to support and improve that HP structure:

### HP Strategy

1. Define early what Badminton Ireland is aiming for at the Olympics (2020 and 2024) and communicate that throughout the organisation and externally. Define how long it will take for the pathway to deliver medals and in what categories. Use other external resources available (Sport Ireland Institute, other NGBs, etc.) to assist in that definition process.

### Governance

2. Recruit a further one or two external members to the Board, based on specific skillsets, and ideally with HP knowledge and experience. This should further enrich the knowledge and contact base of Badminton Ireland and expose it to further opportunities, including commercial contacts.
3. Organise on an annual basis that the Board members meet the HP athletes and Olympians, and get to know them, understand their experiences through the HP programme, at the Olympics etc. Currently there is no interfacing and this would be enriching for both sides.
4. Develop and put forward a proposal on why Ireland should move to a four-year funding cycle and make that part of Badminton Ireland's communications and public affairs strategy.

### Professional Development

5. Look at ways of improving the career path within the NGB, so that there are clear pathways for retention and development, whether through investment in paid external education, leadership courses, external mentoring programmes, secondment to the international federation, etc.

### Commercial/Participation

6. Explore ways to exploit the family friendly element of badminton, i.e. that it can be played by young/old, male/female, and develop a strategy to commercialise that idea. Seek commercial partners who can work with Badminton Ireland to monetize that programme, and use those funds to invest back into the early stages of the pipeline.

**HP Programme**

7. Explore opportunities to work with Universities and academic centres to invest in the data and performance analysis tools required by Badminton Ireland, and for the University/ Academic centre to sponsor and own those tools together with Badminton Ireland. Seek where possible any alternative funding sources for those tools (e.g. Ireland Funds, National Lottery, EU programmes, etc.)
8. With sparring the standout item on the HP programme, look at opportunities for alternative funding sources for this area, including those outlined above, as well as commercial programme partners, education programme partners, etc.

**APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY**

A questionnaire was completed by Badminton Ireland in advance of Rio 2016, giving a snapshot of the health of the Badminton Ireland system in advance of the Games. The purpose of this was to provide Sport Ireland with a picture of where the sport was at leading into the Games, and also to inform the agenda around the post-Games review.

After Rio, an online survey was conducted of the Badminton Ireland athletes, CEO/ Board members, Performance Director and Coaches/Support Staff (between 16th and 26th September 2016). The results of this survey were written up in a report, outlining the key quantitative and qualitative data underpinning four themes. Those themes were Preparation and Readiness for the Games, Games Performance, Games Experience, and NGB Governance of the Games.

Using the above documents as preparatory documents, I conducted face-to-face interviews with the Badminton Ireland athletes, directors and staff, as well as a number of service providers, on dates between October 5th and October 11th. I conducted further interviews via skype or telephone on dates between October 5th and October 14th. The purpose of the interviews was to tease out in greater depth specific themes and to develop a richer understanding of the key areas critical to Badminton Ireland’s performance at Rio 2016.

This document is a summary of the information derived from all three stages above.

**APPENDIX 2: LIST OF THOSE CONSULTED**

The following are those with whom I spoke as part of this consultation process:

- Michael Watt, CEO
- Ronan Rooney, Chairman
- Tom Reidy, (Outgoing) High Performance Director
- Dan Magee, Head Pathway Coach
- Chloe Magee, Athlete
- Scott Evans, Athlete
- Darragh Sheridan, Institute of Sport
- Antonia Rossiter, Institute of Sport

Note that I did not speak with previous HP Coach Irwansyah as part of this review as his contract finished too soon after Rio 2016 for that to be feasible.



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND





# Cycling Ireland

Facilitator: Ciaran Ward

## 5 medals won in Paracycling at the 2016 Paralympic Games

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cycling Ireland 2016 Olympic & Paralympic Review provides an independent, evidence-based report to the NGB on their high performance programme, their preparation for, and performance at the Rio Games. The process examines data and stakeholder contributions based on the review framework advocated by Sport Ireland and agreed by Cycling Ireland. The facilitator has then considered the research conclusions and proposed subsequent recommendations.

The key requirements of the review include:

- Review the effectiveness of the current High Performance system.
- Preparation and Readiness for the Games
- Games Performance & Games Experience
- NGB Governance of High Performance.

A Pre-Games Assessment template was issued as an initial research method. The Post-Games research was activated by the distribution of the Olympic and Paralympic Programme Review Survey. The secondary research phase was conducted through interviews with a wide range of athletes, coaches, staff, Board members and Institute staff. 22 key Cycling Ireland High Performance stakeholders participated in this research.

The findings concluded:

#### Cycling Ireland's current High Performance system

- Cycling Ireland's High Performance Programme is among the most successful and productive in the country.
- The CI HP programme is delivered by highly competent Coaches.
- Whilst there is compelling evidence of systemic delivery particularly in the Paralympic Programme, CI HP provision is more reliant on the individual performance of its two full-time Coaches, than systemic delivery within a clearly defined programme.
- There is an embedded and untenable expectancy on the delivery capacity of the Technical Director role.
- There is an embedded and speculative expectancy on the performance of volunteer staff.

#### Preparation and Readiness for the Games

- Athletes were appropriately prepared and ready for the Olympic and Paralympic Games

- Preparation and Readiness was attributed to the professionalism and commitment of the Athletes, the expertise and resolve of the HP Staff and the utilisation of the HP Training Base in Majorca.

### Games Performance

- The CI Paralympic Programme was the highest performing Irish programme in Rio.
- The CI Olympic Programme equalled its highest ever position in the Road Race but fell short of its agreed targets.

### High Performance Governance

- The strategic objectives of the CI Board, CEO & HP Staff, are not aligned.
- The role of the Technical Director is ill defined resulting in inconsistent expectations or insufficient challenge.
- The role of the CI Board in HP strategy development is unclear.
- The growth of the CI HP programme is not possible under current capacity.

- Sustainable effective delivery of the current HP Programme, with existing capacity, is in jeopardy.

### Recommendations

- The Technical Director should resume the role of High Performance Head Coach.
- Cycling Ireland should consider recruiting a High Performance Team Manager.
- The Head Coach and Team Manager positions, should together replace the current position of Technical Director.
- High Performance strategy design should be expertise led.
- Cycling Ireland should consider further recruitment to redress Coaching Capacity
- Cycling Ireland should maintain its HP Training Base in Majorca whilst continuing to explore all possible avenues for the development of a fit for purpose velodrome in Ireland.

## INTRODUCTION

The Cycling Ireland 2016 Olympic & Paralympic Review intends to provide an independent, evidence-based report to the sport NGB on their high performance programme, their preparation for, and performance at the Rio Games. The process examines data and stakeholder contributions based on the review framework advocated by Sport Ireland and agreed by Cycling Ireland. The facilitator has then considered the research conclusions and proposed subsequent recommendations.

## CURRENT PROFILE

Cycling Ireland (CI) is the governing body for the sport of cycling on the island of Ireland. It has numerous stakeholders, the primary of which, are the members of Cycling Ireland.

Cycling Ireland is responsible for developing and running the High Performance programme within the sport. The programme includes all aspects of preparing and supporting Irish athletes as they compete on the Olympic, Paralympic, World, European, World Cup and Commonwealth stages.

The High Performance programme is primarily funded by Sport Ireland and the NGB's self-generated income. The CI High Performance programme is also supported by Paralympics Ireland the Olympic Council of Ireland, Sport NI and commercial sponsors.

Figure 1. CI High performance Investment 2010-16

| Year | NGB HP Contribution | % of Total HP Spend | Total HP Grants All Sources | Total HP Spend exc carding | Total CI Spend | CI HP Contribution as % of Total Spend | HP Spend as a % of Total CI Spend |
|------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 2010 | 163,983             | 23%                 | €563,438                    | €727,421                   | €1,590,571     | 10%                                    | 35%                               |
| 2011 | 150,136             | 25%                 | €461,131                    | €611,267                   | €1,574,813     | 10%                                    | 29%                               |
| 2012 | 177,921             | 33%                 | €367,392                    | €545,313                   | €1,523,092     | 12%                                    | 24%                               |
| 2013 | 284,384             | 46%                 | €327,657                    | €612,041                   | €1,579,645     | 18%                                    | 21%                               |
| 2014 | 280,761             | 39%                 | €435,608                    | €716,369                   | €1,740,323     | 16%                                    | 25%                               |
| 2015 | 402,480             | 42%                 | €558,311                    | €960,791                   | €2,295,657     | 18%                                    | 24%                               |
| 2016 | 211,486             | 32%                 | €456,000                    | €667,486                   | €2,662,154     | 8%                                     | 17%                               |

This report, as agreed with the client, provides the following information:

- An outline of the methodology implemented by the consultant
- Analysis of the data collated during the research and consultation process
- A conclusion – summarising the review findings, and
- Recommendations for the client to consider for future action.

This report is intended to present an independent and objective record of the research and consultation conducted and to provide informed recommendations to the client. The recommendations made here are presented with a view to assisting and supporting CI in their aspirations to develop World Class athletes and progressing that talent to the very pinnacle of international success.

## METHODOLOGY

The consultant initially proposed a mixed-method approach for the review. The proposal was further evolved at the initial project meeting on October 5th and a methodology was agreed for implementation with immediate effect.

## REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

The key requirements of the review (based on the initial brief) included:

- Review the effectiveness of Cycling Ireland's current High Performance system.
- Preparation and Readiness for the Games
- Games Performance
- Games Experience
- NGB Governance of High Performance.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The initial research method used was the Pre-Games Assessment. The purpose was to gather information and to get an insight into the health of each sport's high performance system in the build-up to the Games and inform the development of the agenda around the post Games review process.

The Post-Games research was activated by the distribution of the Olympic and Paralympic Programme Review Survey. The aim of this survey was to gather information from all members of the sport of Cycling who have been involved in or had influence over the High Performance programme in the year leading into and during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

Contact lists were provided by the NGB and six separate surveys were issued to Olympic Athletes, Paralympic Athletes, CEO/Board Members, Performance Director (PD) and Coaches/Support Staff. The surveys were developed by the Sport Ireland Institute and Paralympics Ireland, with the aim of assessing the success of the high performance programmes in each sport as well as the support provided by the NGB and Sport Ireland.

Questions were tailored to the specific target groups but the athlete, PD and Coach/Support Staff surveys focused on the areas of Games Preparation and Readiness and Games Performance and Experience while the CEO/Board questions were focused on the governance oversight of the High Performance (HP) Programme.

The Olympic Programme surveys ran from the 16th – 26th September 2016. The survey was sent via survey monkey with the PD and/or CEO being requested to send emails to all members advising that the survey was being issued. Reminder emails were issued to non-responders every second day during the survey period. A follow up email was sent to the PD and/or CEO requesting their support in encouraging more people to complete the survey. In total 3 athletes, 1 PD, 9 coaching/support staff and 2 CEO/Board members were surveyed with responses from 3 athletes, 1 PD, 3 coaching/support staff and 2 CEO/Board members.

Sport Ireland documented details of both the quantitative and qualitative data from the four Olympic Programme surveys with qualitative data being compiled into themes for each area when appropriate. The report did not make any analysis of the meaning of the data. Rather it served to act as a tool for the facilitator in the development of this final report.

The survey report was structured into four sections: Preparation and Readiness for the Games, Games Performance, Games Experience and NGB Governance of High Performance. Within these sections, distinction was drawn between the results from each subset surveyed, as the questions were different for each group.

The figures in the report show the mean response to each question. However, as only relatively small groups were surveyed, significant differences in the responses were highlighted through showing the spread of the responses and indicating outliers. In addition to this all comments were given and they have been grouped into themes where appropriate.

The PD was surveyed separately to the Coaching/Support Staff. Where questions were the same, they have been grouped together. The Paralympic Programme surveys ran from 12th-19th of October. Respondents were grouped into Athletes or Coaching & Support Staff. There were 10 respondents from 11 participants surveyed and all raw survey data was made available to the facilitator immediately upon completion.

### SECONDARY RESEARCH PHASE

The secondary research phase method agreed with Cycling Ireland and Sport Ireland, was qualitative and primarily 'descriptive' in nature. This more 'open' approach conducted through interview and meetings was considered the most appropriate technique to engage with a wide range of potential contributors – from athletes, coaches, staff, Board members and Institute staff.

A total of 16 interviews with 10 Athletes (5 Olympic programme, 5 Paralympic Programme) and 6 staff (Technical Director/Olympic Team Manager, CEO, Paralympic Performance Coach, Olympic Road Race Manager, Board Member/HP Liaison and Institute PEP Lead) took place 10th – 20th October. It was agreed with the CEO and Sport Ireland that the scope of the review should expand to include Athletes from the Olympic Programme who did not qualify for Rio but were key benefactors of the delivery of the HP Programme in this cycle and/or the forthcoming Tokyo cycle.

It should be noted at this juncture that all the stakeholders in this review demonstrated tremendous cooperation and commitment to the interview process, which had to take place during the World Championships in Doha and the European Championships in Paris.

Three further meetings with the CEO, Technical Director and Sport Ireland Institute PEP Lead concluded the secondary research phase.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

The online survey was designed to collect preliminary data, and to provide context for the subsequent interview process. The context was framed within five performance system related themes:

- Preparation and Readiness for the Games
- Games Performance
- Games Experience
- NGB Governance of High Performance
- Any other relevant variable proposed by the interviewee

3 athletes, 1 Technical Director, 3 coaching/support staff and 2 CEO/Board members responded to the initial survey. Although this was a small survey pool it did include almost every athlete and staff member who participated in Rio.

The survey provided some context for the interview process, which was intended to extract a more comprehensive examination of the High Performance system. It was also necessary to extend the interview process to include as many stakeholders pertinent to the HP system assessment, including the High Performance athletes who did not make it to Rio and were therefore not included in the initial survey.

## HIGH PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

### Olympic Programme

The CI Olympic Programme is designed and led by the Technical Director. The Technical Director also delivers a critical Coaching support to the Olympic Programme and performed the duties of Olympic Team Manager in Rio. The Olympic Programme delivered high performance provision for 10 athletes across Road & Track. The programme has a well-defined rationale to support a clear 'endurance' focus.

### Olympic Programme Athletes

The Olympic Programme for Rio comprised of 3 'Road' and 7 'Track' cyclists.

### Olympic Programme Staff

The Technical Director remit includes leading HP Programme design and delivery, the Olympic Team Manager role and a significant Coaching responsibility. The remit is primarily focused on the Olympic Programme but does include an additional oversight of the Paralympic Programme, u23 Road & Junior Programmes.

Every athlete who participated in the review process highlighted the contribution of the performance personnel as the most highly valued component of the HP Programme. The Technical Director, Personal Coaches, Mechanics, Soigneurs and SSSM personnel all received consistent and repeated commendation from the Athletes. The Athletes also highlighted that maintaining or increasing the volume of delivery here as key.

The Technical Director in particular received extensive appreciation from all the athletes surveyed and interviewed, for his contribution to the HP Programme. This sentiment was also widespread among programme staff and the CEO.

Each constituent member of the HP programme also stated that they would favour an increase in the volume of support provided by personnel, whilst acknowledging the increasing demand on the finite Human resource. Despite the consistently high value placed on the capability of the programme staff, it was widely recognised that current capacity was overwhelmed and unsustainable.

The Sport Ireland Institute PEP Lead also recognised the budgetary and reporting deficiency and proposed that ill-defined role clarity has legitimised a lack of check, appropriate challenge and follow through on the day-to-day delivery of certain assumed duties.

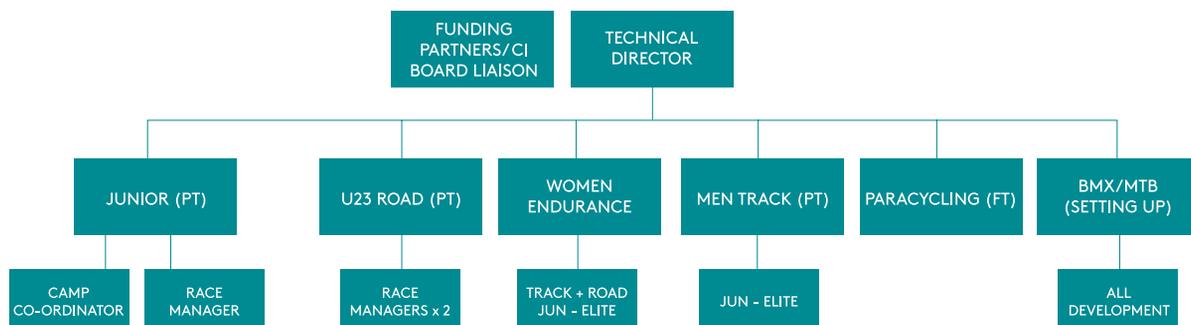


Figure 2. HP Organisational Chart

**Paralympic Programme**

The CI Paralympic Programme was designed by the Technical Director during the first half of this cycle and delivered jointly by the Technical Director and the Paralympic Performance Coach. The Paralympic Performance Coach assumed full design and delivery responsibilities thereafter (2015/16).

**Paralympic Athletes**

The Paralympic Programme for Rio comprised of 10 athletes, 8 of whom competed on both ‘Road’ and ‘Track’. The remaining two athletes competed in Hand Cycling, on road only.

**Paralympic Staff**

The Paralympic Performance Coach functioned with strategic and delivery autonomy during Rio preparation and performance.

A volunteer Team Manager, appointed in 2014, assisted the Performance Coach. The introduction of the Team Manager was uniformly accredited as a crucial performance accelerant in this programme. The Performance Coach was relieved of much of the programme’s logistical and administrative burden and was afforded an increased Coaching capacity.

The contribution of the Performance Coach received intensely positive feedback from almost all quarters. Only the Hand Cyclists who were both very late arrivals to the programme, felt that they received comparatively reduced programme support to that of their Paralympic teammates. Hand Cyclists aside, the Performance Coach’s delivery of the Paralympic Programme was resoundingly endorsed as the major systemic difference to this programme over the last cycle.

There is a consistent message received during interviews that the delivery of this programme is heavily reliant on voluntary contributions and the Performance Coach’s current delivery capacity has been exceeded and is unsustainable.

## PREPARATION AND READINESS FOR THE GAMES

### Olympic Programme Athletes

Survey responses were consistently high across the board here. There was only one survey response that stated an Athlete was “very dissatisfied” with Coaching support and upon further examination through interview, it was exposed that this response was made in error and should have read “very satisfied”. Opinion among HP Athletes was also consistently high concerning HP Programme’s delivery during the qualification period. Every Athlete surveyed and interviewed were either satisfied or very satisfied with the HP programme delivery during qualification and in the build up to the Games.

Athletes were asked to rate various elements of their Games preparation and support provided over the year leading into the Games.

The Athletes who are members of World Tour Professional Teams stated that many of the supports were not really relevant to them as day-to-day delivery was primarily the responsibility of their employers. However, there was consensus among the pro Riders that communication with the HP Programme was very good and the transition from their Pro Team into the National Team was of a standard comparable to the leading nations in cycling. “Many of my professional colleagues regularly complain about the drop in ‘standards’ when going from their professional team to the National team, but we are always one of the best prepared teams at major Championships”.

The Track athletes corroborate their Pro colleagues’ assertion that preparation and readiness for Rio, and other major championships, is effectively planned, communicated and delivered by the HP staff. “I’ll not say we are one step ahead of everybody else, but we are definitely not behind anyone in terms of planning, preparation and delivery at major Championships”.

### Olympic Programme Staff

The Technical Director is responsible for the preparation and readiness of the National Team for major championships, including this summer’s Olympic Games. Commendation for his delivery here has received widespread and consistent approval from HP athletes, coaching and support staff. Coaching, Supports and CI staff went on to acknowledge that whilst athlete’s preparation was prioritised the delivery of other duties and responsibilities were jeopardised. The attention to budgetary and reporting duties waned and the attention to the management and review of staff varied from verbal, informal interactions as and when required, to apportioning autonomy based on perceived capability. The impact on athlete’s preparation may not have been at risk this time, but it is inevitable that persistent delivery in this mode is likely to result in a detrimental impact on programme capability.

### Paralympic Programme Athletes

Athlete responses and engagement here were very positive apart from two recurring themes.

- Limited access to coaching and support staff due to a late arrival into the programme, just before the Games, and
- No access to a velodrome in Ireland

Both Hand Cyclists were late call-ups to the programme and did not feel as though they were part of the HP Para Programme and received only limited support. That aside, the other 7 Athletes who engaged in the review process were consistently explicit about the Paralympic Programme’s Coaching and SSSM delivery ensuring effective preparation and readiness for Rio with the resources available.

Those Athletes who had also competed in London 2012 referenced the improvement in programme delivery “I couldn’t emphasise the difference enough. It was far better for Rio. Preparation and Planning. Advice, communication, and support. All better.”

**Paralympic Programme Staff**

The Performance Coach is responsible for the Paralympic Programme and its preparation for major championships including this summer’s Olympic Games. The athletes and staff have uniformly endorsed the Performance Coach’s delivery. The introduction of a Team Manager was integral to the programme having the requisite capacity to effectively prepare for Rio. The Performance Coach believed he needed an extra Coach to appropriately prepare such a broad range of athletic ability across the programme and conceded that some athletes’ readiness will have suffered as a result.

**GAMES PERFORMANCE & EXPERIENCE**

**Olympic Programme**

| 2013 Target                         | 2015 Revised Target | 2016 Result   |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Qualify 3-4 Male. Road              | Qualify 3 Road      | Qualified 2 Road. 13th Men’s Elite Road Race 29th Men’s Elite Road Race |
| Qualify 2 Male & 1 Female. Track    | Qualify 2 Track     | Qualified 1 Track   |
| 1 Medal & 3 Top 10 finishes (Track) |                     | 5th in Heat, 4th in Repechage. Women’s Keiran                           |

Figure 3. Rio 2016 Olympic Targets and Results

A 13th place equalled the highest ever finish in an Elite Road Race by an Irish athlete in the Olympic Games. CI also qualified their first ever Female Track Cyclist. All Athletes and Staff were either satisfied or very satisfied with their Games performance. Coaching support was again highlighted for commendation among athletes and Staff, citing Rio specific planning and preparation as one of the most significant improvements in the Programme’s performance. “Adaptation is key. We are only together a few days so planning to make that transition as seamless as possible is important. CI does a good job. The apartment beside the track instead of the Village was a good example of good planning impacting on preparation and performance.”

Issues negatively impacting on performance were marginal and largely focused around factors beyond the control of the HP Programme, such as accreditation and IOC Race organization. “It was satisfying to see and hear the improvements from the past number of Olympics Games. The feedback from the team that we have received will however make it better again for 2020. We have already changed our communication strategy from the feedback from the Games in Rio and trialed at the recent European Road Champs to positive effect.”

| 2013 Target       | 2015 Revised Target | 2016 Result                                | Event  | Results (Per Event)                                       |
|-------------------|---------------------|--|--|---|
| Qualify 6-8 Bikes | Qualify 6 Bikes     | 7 Bikes Qualified                          | 7 Bikes Qualified  | 7 Bikes Qualified   |
| 3-5 Medals        | 3-5 Medals          | 5 Medals<br>2 Gold<br>2 Silver<br>1 Bronze | Women’s B Tandem Kilo<br>Men’s C2 IP<br>Men’s C3 IP  | 7th<br>5th<br>4th<br>Bronze                               |
| 6 Top 10 Finishes | 6 Top 10 Finishes   | 9 Top 10 Finishes                          | Women’s B Tandem IP<br><br>Men’s B Tandem Kilo   | 5th<br><br>8th  |
|                   |                     |  | Men’s C2 20km TT<br><br>Men’s H3 20km TT<br><br>Women’s H2 20km TT<br><br>Men’s B Tandem 30km TT<br><br>Men’s B Tandem 30km TT<br><br>Men’s C3 30km TT<br><br>Women’s B Tandem 30km TT | Silver<br><br>11th<br>11th<br>6th<br>17th<br>Gold<br>Gold |
|                   |                     |  | WH2-4 Road Race<br>MH3 Road Race   | 14th<br>9th   |
|                   |                     |  | MC1-3 Road Race  | 5th & 24th  |
|                   |                     |  | Women’s B Tandem Road Race<br><br>Men’s B Tandem Road Race   | Silver<br><br>12th  |

Figure 4. Rio 2016 Paralympic Targets and Results

The CI Paralympic Programme was the most successful Irish performance programme in Rio 2016. With five medals, including two Gold, the programme exceeded all stretch targets and surpassed the outstanding performance at the previous Paralympics, four years ago. Furthermore, all of the 2016 Paralympic medallists were different athletes from those who medalled in London, providing the clearest indication of systemic delivery in this research.

Two thirds of those athletes who engaged in the review process were either satisfied or very satisfied with their own performance and the performance of the Coaching and SSSM staff. Coaching and SSSM staff consistently scored very well with almost every athlete responding 'very satisfied' with their Games performance. This assertion was further endorsed during interviews when both supports were continually proposed as major contributors to the success in Rio.

The Performance Coach was routinely singled out for commendation by Athletes, CI Staff, SSSM staff and the CI Board alike. The Performance Coach accepted that he didn't think that any 'medals were dropped' by the performance of the programme but conceded that he was 'spread far too thin' across his duties and without the introduction of the Team Manager would not have produced the results achieved. The performance of the Team Manager was the single most positive intervention impacting on the ability of the Performance Coach to deliver his Games performance.

The Performance Coach also accepted that more could and should have been done to introduce all the athletes to the programme at an earlier stage in order to appropriately avail of the HP programmes full delivery, however, an additional Coach would have been required to meet the needs of such a broad range of athletic ability and experience.

With such a successful Paralympics it was perhaps unsurprising that the Athletes recorded a very positive response to their 'Games experience', however, there was a marked disparity expressed about their 'Post Games experience'. There was a range of 90% recorded across the group. Under further

scrutiny most negative responses were fuelled by uncertainty, a disappointing performance in Rio or a perceived lack of recognition compared to their Olympic counterparts.

Uncertainty was prevalent among Tandem athletes primarily because of the absence of 'Pilot' funding. This was proposed as the single most important factor determining future participation towards Tokyo.

Athletes were aware of the Post Games supports provided by Institute but most chose to not participate for a variety of unconnected reasons. Family support was deemed the most important support when managing the Post Games experience.

## HIGH PERFORMANCE GOVERNANCE

### Olympic Programme

The Technical Director has strategic, administrative and delivery responsibility for the CI High Performance Programme, including the Olympic Programme. The CEO is the Technical Director's line manager who is in turn accountable to the Board of Cycling Ireland.

In 2013 the CI Performance Strategy Review Report recommended establishing a specialist High Performance Review Group to act as a buffer between those responsible for the HP Programme, and the Board. "This Group should have a clear remit to provide support, challenge and advice to the Performance Director and its staff and to oversee the direction and implementation of the High Performance strategy. The make-up of the advisory group to include a balance of experts from within and outside the High Performance programme and to include World Class international expertise (especially in track cycling programmes)."

There is no current function that resembles this recommendation. Currently one Board member is designated with a HP Liaison brief similar to that outlined in the 2013 Review, however, the operational efficacy of that role is now defective. It neither services the needs of the HP Programme or the CI Board in the manner it was intended.

The relationship between the Board and the HP Programme has deteriorated. Board concerns regarding strategic, reporting and budgetary due diligence, have been met with HP Programme concerns of strategic, budgetary and operational interference.

The HP Programme staff concedes that reporting standards and protocols are not good enough. They attribute the deficiency here as a casualty of programme demands exceeding capacity over a sustained period. Programming and Coaching delivery are prioritised duties impacting on Athletes performance. The reporting and communication of said delivery has been given less attention.

In the absence of an effective reporting and communication method and ongoing concerns about the potential for 'overspend', the Board has increased budgetary scrutiny over the HP Programme. "HP is our only significant variable expenditure, so if not managed properly this has the potential to put the entire organization in jeopardy." The Board would also concede that recent scrutiny has included a desire for an increased strategic input. "The perception among the membership is that HP is only for a few people. We understand that Track Cycling may be a current priority, however, Track cyclists make up less than 5% of our membership."

#### **Olympic Programme Athletes**

The Olympic Programme Athletes have universally commended the HP provision they receive on this programme, examples of which have been cited throughout this report. They have a collective understanding of their roles within the programme and concur with how resources are identified and prioritised. They believe in the competency of the staff comparing delivery to that of the World's leading cycling nations.

None of the Athletes surveyed or interviewed however, were able to reference a formal debrief or performance review process. The Technical Director would regularly deliver informal verbal debrief and athlete reviews but Athletes involved in this review process were not able to reference a document that could be utilised for lessons learned.

#### **Olympic Programme Staff**

The 2013 Review recommended to accelerate the transition of the Head Coach to take on the full responsibilities of a Performance Director.

From the evidence gathered in this report, it would appear that the duties and responsibilities typically delivered by a Performance Director have simply been added to the obligations of the Head Coach without a corresponding increase in capacity. The subsequent morphed role of Technical Director has not been clearly defined resulting in inconsistent expectations.

Cycling Ireland has a management performance template designed to facilitate the performance review and appraisal of the Technical Director, however, provision here has not been effective and the Sport Ireland Institute Pursuit of Excellence Programme (PEP) has been the preferred source of performance review, appraisal and CPD for HP staff.

PEP is primarily a performance support for the Irish HP Coach community that has delivered over 60 World and European medals covering 26 sports. Of the 26 High Performance Systems utilising PEP, only 3 provide systemic staff development, review, appraisal or feedback.

Cycling Ireland was one of only a few sports selected by PEP to target HP Staff with a bespoke coaching review mechanism in preparation for Rio, 'Vantage Point'. The process provided expert observation around specific identified coaching variables culminating in recommendations to the Coach and a report to the NGB.

The process revealed a 'phenomenal coaching product' in CI's Olympic programme, but concluded that this was compromised because of the current dual role of the Technical Director. Administrative and communication responsibilities were undoubtedly given less attention but responsibility here still contributed to threaten the effectiveness of the day-to-day coaching delivery.

A full report was submitted to the NGB but there has been little evidence to suggest that practice or remit has been appropriately challenged or changed as a result.

The Olympic Programme is profoundly reliant on volunteers, with high levels of expertise, needed to address the current capacity deficit.

### **Paralympic Programme**

The Technical Director has strategic, administrative and delivery responsibility for the CI High Performance Programme, including the Paralympic Programme. The CEO is the Technical Director's line manager who is in turn accountable to the Board of Cycling Ireland.

The Paralympic Programme was primarily delivered by the Performance Coach. Although directly responsible to the Technical Director, the Performance Coach was given increasing strategic and delivery responsibility between 2013-15 before finally assuming strategic and delivery autonomy over the programme.

### **Paralympic Programme Athletes**

The long-standing established members of this programme, who have received the majority of provision, have consistently approved the HP service they receive. They have a collective understanding of their roles within the programme and concur with how resources are identified and prioritized. Only the newest members of the programme have challenged the impact of delivery here.

All the Athletes highly value the competency of the HP staff, particularly the Coaching staff. However, none of the Athletes surveyed or interviewed were able to reference a formal debrief or performance review process that they have received.

### **Paralympic Programme Staff**

The Performance Coach refers to feeling supported by the Technical Director and CEO but does not seem to be in receipt of any formal management performance review other than that provided by PEP. The Performance Coach also accepts that the formal performance review of the athletes in the programme has been limited because capacity has been "spread so thin".

The Performance Coach went on to suggest that his current contract bears no resemblance to the duties and responsibilities he performs and this is symptomatic of an under appreciation of the role, from the CI Board. He contends that there is no understanding or acceptance that the capability and capacity required to effectively deliver the Paralympic Programme is no different from that of the Olympic Programme.

Whilst he believes that his charges did not under achieve as a result of the programme's overextended capacity, he does not believe that current delivery is sustainable.

## **CONCLUSION**

The CI High Performance community, have enthusiastically shared a most valuable contribution toward this research. The responses collated here were consistently imparted with a genuine passion for improving Cycling in Ireland. Whilst there has undoubtedly been an increasingly sometimes-strained relationship between HP Staff and Board, there was a prevailing common ground among those interviewed matched by an obvious desire to progress Cycling's High Performance Programme.

The sample of CI respondents engaged in the review may be small (22), but it remains a statistically significant representation of the population involved in the HP system in both Olympic and Paralympic Programmes. The feedback and views expressed by the respondents are personal views based on their own understanding and perceptions of the current HP system. When conducting this type of qualitative research, it can be open to interpretative error, for example, focusing on 'strong' views of individuals that may not be fully informed about existing procedures and practice. Thus, making any deductions from the feedback alone might be vulnerable to error leading to inappropriate recommendations.

The following conclusive section provides an overview of the research findings, balanced with input from Institute Staff and the consultant's knowledge, understanding

and analysis of high performance programmes within sport.

There was a clear consensus around current systemic and operational best practice and/or shortcomings. As with many reviews, it is common to identify aspects that require improvement. The following points highlight what has been confirmed during the review and in no way intends to criticise any group or individual. The only intent is to provide CI and its stakeholders with a clear picture of the current high performance system performance.

The review has highlighted a number of key points and shared experiences. Common themes from the research will contribute to inform the recommendations section herein

#### **Cycling Ireland's current High Performance system**

- Cycling Ireland's High Performance Programme is among the most successful and productive in the country
- The CI HP programme is delivered by highly competent Coaches
- Whilst there is compelling evidence of systemic delivery particularly in the Paralympic Programme, CI HP provision is more reliant on the individual performance of its two full-time Coaches, than systemic delivery within a clearly defined programme
- There is an embedded and untenable expectancy on the delivery capacity of the Technical Director role
- There is an embedded and speculative expectancy on the performance of volunteer staff.

#### **Preparation and Readiness for the Games**

- Athletes were appropriately prepared and ready for the Olympic and Paralympic Games
- Preparation and Readiness was attributed to the professionalism and commitment of the Athletes, the expertise and resolve of the HP Staff and the utilisation of the HP Training base in Majorca

#### **Games Performance**

- The CI Paralympic Programme was the highest performing Irish programme in Rio
- The CI Olympic Programme equalled its

highest ever position in the Road Race but fell short of its agreed targets

#### **High Performance Governance**

- The strategic objectives of the CI Board, CEO & HP Staff, are not aligned.
- The role of the Technical Director is ill defined resulting in inconsistent expectations or insufficient challenge
- The role of the CI Board in HP strategy development is unclear
- The growth of the CI HP programme is not possible under current capacity
- The sustainable effective delivery of the current HP Programme, with existing capacity, is in jeopardy

## CYCLING RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made here are presented with a view to assisting and supporting Cycling Ireland in their aspirations to improve an already highly functioning High Performance Programme. Much of the HP Programme delivery is of the highest standard and consistently produces world-class performances. The focus of this section is to propose where and how performance gains might be achieved.

The majority of recommendations that were proposed in the 2013 Review have been addressed, however, recommendations made in this report consonant with those proposed in 2013 should prompt a reassessment of the progress made in each instance.

### 1. The Technical Director should resume the role of High Performance Head Coach

All evidence revealed in this review suggests that the current Technical Director delivers a high level of coaching competency. The Head Coach role should have a clear remit determined by the Board and CEO, but should include the primary strategic responsibility of the High Performance Programme. The Head Coach should be accountable to the CEO where renewed role clarity will stipulate appropriate 'Check & Challenge'.

### 2. Cycling Ireland should consider recruiting a High Performance Team Manager

The HP Team Manager role should have a clear remit including primary reporting, budgetary, administrative and logistical responsibility. A similar role that focused on the administrative and logistical demands in the Paralympic Programme worked well, however, this new role should be a full-time paid post with responsibility for both Olympic and Paralympic HP Programmes. The Team Manager should regularly report directly to the Board and CEO.

### 3. The Head Coach and Team Manager positions, should together replace the current position of Technical Director

The recommendations are intended to protect and enhance what is best about current delivery within the HP Programme whilst addressing and improving the facets required to effectively support successful delivery. It is important to stress that only the concomitant implementation of should be considered.

### 4. High Performance strategy design should be expertise led

- The Board of Cycling Ireland has overall strategic, governance and policy-making responsibility for the entire organisation. It is accountable to its members and investors and is responsible for the design and delivery of the 2015-2019 Cycling Ireland Corporate Strategy
- The design and delivery of the HP Strategy should be the sole responsibility of the CI High Performance staff, provided said strategy aligns with the overall Cycling Ireland Corporate Strategy. The HP Strategy, including rationale, should be clearly communicated to the Board. Monitoring and evaluation of the delivery of the HP Strategy, should be measured against clearly defined and agreed targets. This will help to protect the integrity of the Board's commitment to its members, the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and securely sanction the strategic autonomy of the High Performance Programme to the High Performance Staff
- The High Performance Staff should identify and set a series of annual performance targets, agreed by the Board, targeting success at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic & Paralympic Games. Clearly communicated targets and rationale will encourage investment in the

HP Programme by all the relevant stakeholders (athletes, coaches, support staff, Cycling Ireland Board and funding partners) and confirm that the programme delivery is on course.

**5. Increased Coaching Capacity**

Coaching capacity has been reduced since the Junior/Development Coach position was vacated and not replaced. The demand for an increased coaching capacity is already pronounced in a system that weighs heavily on volunteer expertise and where demand has exceeded capacity for a prolonged period. Cycling Ireland should consider recruiting additional Coaching Staff as a matter of priority.

**6. Physical Training Environment**

Cycling Ireland should maintain its HP Training Base in Majorca whilst continuing to explore all possible avenues for the development of a fit for purpose velodrome in Ireland.

I acknowledge that by considering the recommendations proposed here, that a series of other actions would also need to be taken. However, without addressing these recommendations first, it is the opinion of this work, that other actions may be uncoordinated, temporary and have a negative rather than positive impact



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND





GOLFING UNION  
OF IRELAND



# Confederation of Golf in Ireland

Facilitator: Maeve Buckley

2 male and 2 female Irish golfers competed as Golf returned to the Olympic Games for the first time since 1904.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CGI (Confederation of Golf in Ireland) is a company established by the GUI (Golfing Union of Ireland), ILGU (Irish Ladies Golfing Union) and PGA (Professional Golfers Association). The CGI was created with the objectives of increasing participation, continuing international success, developing a common plan for high performance (HP) for the 2016 and 2020 Olympic Games and looking at the programmes, services and support required to develop players in Ireland from junior through to elite level. As such the CGI provides a combined submission to Sport Ireland on behalf of both governing bodies, and so this report is written as one CGI document, although both governing bodies were interviewed independently.

### ILGU

The ILGU are responsible for the development of amateur golf. Given that they are currently involved in both the production of elite amateurs and home international winners, as well as professional players and Major/Olympic winners, a tension is created within

the organisation. Until the question of whether they should be undertaking both these activities is clarified internally, there can be some shared goals, but no overall shared vision, and players, coaches and HP staff will remain caught in the middle. There is currently a lack of alignment between the Board and the HP team, with a level of frustration and lack of understanding between the two, which creates a tension through the HP programme.

Huge positive developments are being made continuously to the HP programme. There are good coaches throughout the country, and there is a strong pipeline of young players coming through. There is good leadership from the CEO and Chair, and a good rapport amongst management and staff and players. Golf is in its infancy at the Olympics and there would appear to be positive times ahead with great talent emerging in women's golf in Ireland, and solid progress being made at CGI level. Some work needs to be done on performance management and review processes for staff. The biggest game changer

for the ILGU in high performance terms would be to align the Board and the aims of the HP programme.

### GUI

The GUI recently completed a review of their HP system. The review found that there appears to be a lot of talent emerging through the junior system, despite the system being disjointed between regional and national level with a lack of a single general mission. Based on the review findings, significant positive changes are planned to take effect over the next cycle, which will likely show positive results over the medium term. Given that the GUI HP review

took place so recently, this review has focused more on the Games experience itself, and specifically on the athlete's view of golf's first Olympic experience. The golfers view of how to create a motivational atmosphere at a large scale sporting event is informative, given their Ryder Cup experiences.

With the changes from the GUI review implemented, focus should also be given to ensuring there is good understanding of HP at Board level, as well as a well-functioning HP committee, and available services accessed at a number of points across the HP pathway.

## **ILGU - PREPARATION AND READINESS FOR THE GAMES**

### Performance Targets

With the women golfers their Olympics place depended on world rankings, and the world amateur team rankings, with each country allowed to enter their top two male female players dependent on cumulative rankings. Stephanie Meadow and Leona Maguire represented Ireland, and were given some assistance in playing a number of extra golf events to boost their ranking to ensure qualification. The overall stated CGI performance target in advance was to win one medal, but there were no clear performance targets at the Olympics for the Irish women golfers. This was partly due to the fact that of it being the first time participating and that one of the athletes was still an amateur golfer.

### Training Camps and Training Environment

Whilst Stephanie Meadow received some support from the ILGU, her active involvement in the HP programme was some years ago. Leona had represented Ireland during the summer, and finished in the programme last year. Both women are based in the US and have coaches there who manage their training environment and camps. However, in advance of Rio there was improved support and interaction between the college coach and the ILGU HP lead. Overall golf tends to be a more

'individual and personal sport' as quoted in the Rio review survey, with athletes often training independently with their own personal coach.

In terms of the training environment in Ireland for the HP coaches and service providers, there was positivity about the management, staff interaction, and information on forward planning. Areas of relative weakness were that of having clearly focused personal objectives for all staff, clear measureable goals for all athletes, and resources being prioritized to the highest potential athletes.

### Financial Support

Whilst Sport Ireland investment in the HP programme in the year leading into the Games was appreciated, according to the survey, ideally greater budget was needed. Overall view of the NGB investment in the HP programme was positive, although there was at times the feeling within the HP team of resource being spread too thinly rather than focused on fewer participants.

### External Organisation Support

The Sport Ireland Institute were perceived as being great in supporting Games preparation - they were focused, challenging and demanding, all of which was perceived as being very helpful in developing the programme and programme leads. From a programme point of view their services were very important - psychology, S&C,

technical skills, physiotherapy, and nutrition, were all availed of. The Sport Ireland Institute organized a session with guest speaker athletes and these types of opportunities for the ILGU to mix with and learn from other sports are particularly valued. The role of the Sport Ireland Institute as a type of independent outside mentor was also highly valued.

SINI have also provided services, although the survey showed some dissatisfaction with these services. There was no particular view on the support of the Olympic Council of Ireland in the year leading into the Games.

### **Athlete Readiness**

Stephanie and Leonie both largely did their own thing in terms of preparation for Rio. While neither athlete completed the survey, the view from the coaching and support staff was one of satisfaction with the competition exposure, access to training facilities, preparation for the Games competition and Games experience. Things that positively impacted athlete readiness was game time (for Stephanie) and a good rest pattern and play-in schedule (for Leonie), and having individual programmes for both. More competitive play (for Stephanie) and better scheduling of the sport, with entries closing earlier to determine the teams, would have helped both players. In that case better planning could have been put into place, and more contact time with support staff scheduled in. Overall both athletes are at the start of their career, and in many ways the Rio experience was readying them for 2020.

### **Leadership**

Leadership from the CEO was cited as being very positive, with the CEO fully supportive of the HP programme and having a vision for its success.

### **Support from the NGB Board**

This was cited as an area for improvement as there is not agreement on what constitutes high performance of elite players versus growing the pool of players representing Ireland at amateur level. It was suggested that direct HP Manager reporting to the Board would be beneficial.

## **ILGU - GAMES PERFORMANCE AND GAMES EXPERIENCE**

The overall perception of performance at the Rio 2016 Games was one of satisfaction and pride in the two athletes. It was an emotional time for Stephanie Meadow following the death of her father the previous year, whilst for Leonie competing with all the professionals was mentally challenging also. For both to finish in the top half of the field was considered positive. Paul McGinley, as team leader, was considered to be a real support to the women in overcoming the mental challenges, whilst he spoke very positively of their performance and attitude.

The feeling was that Rio 2016 was a test year, but hugely valuable in giving big event experience, which has already paid off in terms of a top ten finish afterwards in the Canadian Open and a Bronze Medal at the World Amateur Games in Mexico. The intention is that both women will compete again at Tokyo 2020, with this Olympics under their belt, as well as a lot more competition experience in the meantime, and at that stage should have better medal prospects.

Overall it was noted that the quality of on-site logistics was poor (poor quality accommodation, etc.). It was also noted that the quality of on-site logistics was poor (poor quality accommodation, etc.). It was also noted that a post-Olympic debrief would have been helpful to the athletes.

Note that I did not speak to either of the women golfers for this review, nor did they complete the survey. The games experience detail was completed by the male golfers only, and so I will summarize that only in the GUI section.

## ILGU - STRATEGIC REFLECTIONS ON THE HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME

### NGB structure

Whilst in most sporting organisations HP is the outlet for the best athletes, for golf athletes there are other programmes, e.g. the Curtis Cup. Whilst the HP programme within women's golf in Ireland now has a focus on the Olympics, it also focuses on European Women, European Girls, Curtis Cup, and the World Amateur Team Championships. This split focus between developing the best possible amateurs or developing amateur who will go on to become professional golfers causes an unresolved tension within the ILGU. The CGI has been set up to look at emerging professional golf, amongst other initiatives, but until such time as a new One Governing Body for Golf in Ireland has been agreed with clear objectives on development of amateur/professional players, this will continue to be an issue within the ILGU.

Overall, the HP curriculum has seen significant advances over the course of this last Olympic cycle, with a structured player pathway now in operation, and significant numbers of juniors participating at club level. The ILGU is constantly reviewing and seeking to improve the HP programme, with no part of it there longer than two years. The leadership is perceived as being open to suggestions and improvements.

### Finances

About 16%/17% of ILGU funding comes from Sport Ireland (CGI administers the Sport Ireland HP grants), with the balance from affiliation fees. It can be a source of tension that affiliation fees may end up being used to finance parts of the HP programme which is aimed at a small number of elite players versus supporting clubs to grow the game at club level.

### HP Committee

A HP Committee was set up to overview the programme, and was comprised of a HP Director from the Board, High Performance Manager, Coaching Systems Manager, Chief Selector and Ladies Team Captain. An external representative (Patrick Hazlett) was invited onto the Committee to provide

commercial thought and input and an external voice. Due to a number of factors, the Committee failed to function effectively, with reasons cited including lack of clarity around roles and leadership, disagreement on overall shared vision, only three meetings per annum, meetings being too long and operational, meeting date changes, and poor communication. It was noted that all present were open to working together, but ultimately the HP Committee failed to effectively underpin the HP programme.

### Player Pathway and Talent ID

There is a well-structured player pathway within ladies' golf. There are three programmes on the HP side, with the progression being from Club to Regional to Funded Players to Horizon to HP.

At club level there are specific participation programmes to encourage girls to take up the game, including the Girls 4 Golf 4 Life programme, which is running as a pilot in clubs. Girls with potential are identified for coaching at regional level, with increased numbers of players with lower handicaps being identified through that system. There are ten regional coaches at this level offering coaching to the best of this emerging talent from the club scene. Coaching is provided mostly for underage players, although some older players are also coached, and there appears to be no upper age cap, or specific criteria around maximum handicap, which reduces the overall impact of this part of the programme.

The Horizon programme started in 2015/6 and is for the emerging talent from the regional/district coaching cells. Initially Horizon was started with an open call for players (aged between 12 and 18), and had a group of circa forty players and their parents for a weekend at the Heritage. Afterwards this number was reduced to a core of circa ten or twelve players, who then get a player programme, tournament schedule, etc. At this level the HP Manager works a lot with parents, and girls' personal coaches, which can be challenging, and the support of the Sport Ireland Institute in managing this has been appreciated. The intention is to repeat the Horizon process every two years.

At the top of the pyramid there is a move to pro, with the CGI grant aiding emerging pros. The programme goal is to make the top players self-sufficient, and support those players in leading their own journey. The HP Programme has body strengthening and golf related specifics, while each player has an individual performance plan and players keep statistics on accuracy, etc. The HP manager maintains contact with players at pro level (through role with CGI), so there is an ongoing link back to the ILGU HP programme.

The view is that through the work undertaken on the HP programme over this cycle, it has become more elite and in three years' time should be one of the strongest teams at the World Amateur Team Championship. Numbers of girls playing golf in Ireland look very positive and overall the pipeline is good.

#### **Management and coaching**

The overall view is one of happiness with the staff, both management and coaching. The HP Manager and HP support have worked well together as a team, with complimenting strengths. Great improvements have been made in coach education - a two-day course was developed with the Sport Ireland Institute which has greatly improved the common understanding amongst coaches. Ideally the ILGU would undertake more coach education and shared learning sessions amongst coaches. The district coaches are Level 3 coaches, so technically strong, and there is a low attrition amongst the coaches, which is also a positive. There is a view that there needs to be a focus on direction within the coaching.

#### **Training Centres/Camps**

There is no national training facility as such for women's golf, and so the development teams undertake coaching camps when feasible, such as an annual warm weather training weekend. With more money they would ideally undertake several weeks of warm weather training, whilst the lack of one central facility (in Ireland) may also be a hindrance to progress.

#### **Services**

The ILGU has developed a panel of expert service providers who support on psychology, S&C, physio, technique and the short game. These service providers also work with the parents, and have assisted a lot in professionalizing the programme over the last number of years. Ideally with greater funding more access would be made of these services, with the service providers also travelling to camps with the girls.

### **ILGU - NGB GOVERNANCE OF HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME**

#### **Board**

The ILGU Board is comprised of ten people, with five regional representatives, and a director of Finance, HP Director, Junior Golf Director and Ladies Golf Union Director (GB&I). The nominated directorships are advertised, with positions filled by interviews using external support, thereby ensuring specific skills and career experience. All Board members must be female and members of golf clubs. The Board has a rotation policy in place, with one third of members leaving every year. The Board does an induction process every year and there is a HP report at every Board meeting. The Board is perceived as being well-led, with a strong Chairperson and CEO, and with good governance in place.

However, there is also a view that some of the Board member's understanding of the HP Programme is limited and oversight of the Programme has in recent years become very operational rather than influencing and gaining agreement on the overall strategy and objectives of the programme. The reasons cited for this are multiple and complex and mostly centre on a clear agreement on the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the individuals involved on the HP Team and the Board's role of governance and oversight of the programme.

The view is that the HP programme is making good progress, but with improvement on roles and accountabilities progress could be even greater.

**Relations with International Federation**

Golf at the Olympics was managed by the International Golf Federation (IGF) which includes representation from the R&A. The R&A Forum takes place twice per annum at St. Andrews with all the governing bodies of golf in GB&I invited to attend. The ILGU also have a Director on the Ladies Golf Union (LGU) and a representative on the European Golf Association Championships Committee. Both R&A and LGU are very supportive and excited about golf in the Olympics, although with some divided views between professional and amateur at that level also.

**CGI**

CGI is perceived as having worked well through the Rio programme, with shared planning, shared high performance and a very open relationship, despite the differing cultures of the two organisations. It is envisaged that the proposed new Governing Body for Golf will be in the initial phase of implementation for the next Olympic cycle.

**Training/recruitment/induction/succession**

There were no specific views raised regarding training and succession, with general satisfaction around the professional development opportunities for staff. CEO

support to staff was noted as being strong and highly valued.

**Reviews/Processes/Lessons learned**

Player reviews normally take place at the end of events, while the player logbook also notes lessons learned etc. Every year the Junior programme does a review with the national committee to get ideas and feedback, whilst athletes feedback is also incorporated too. With coaches' reviews tend to be informal (e.g. a coffee), whilst group informal team sessions have taken place, such as off-site activity sessions with all the HP staff and coaches. However, a formal process for the review of coaches and players is not yet in place and proper templates and documentation needs to be developed. The Sport Ireland Institute have helped with a programme review, and ideally the team would like an annual negatives and positives review, incorporating the lessons learned, actions and follow-up into the programme for the next year.

There is no formal review of support staff – it happens informally, and there is no performance management training. This works well as there is a good understanding between the team, but needs to be more structured.

## ILGU - RECOMMENDATIONS

### The following are my recommendations:

1. Define what the CGI is aiming for at the Olympics in terms of women's golf (2020 and 2024) and communicate that throughout the organisation and externally. Define how long it will take for the pathway to deliver medals and in what categories (if the IOC introduce mixed golf, for example). Use other external resources available (Sport Ireland Institute, other NGBs, etc.) to assist in that definition process.
2. Review regional coaching HP system to ensure that it really is coaching those with genuine high potential. Clearly define the development programme parameters – specifically, introduce and enforce age caps and handicap limits for coaching at district/regional level. Publish these parameters on the website so that it is clear for all involved.
3. Introduce further clarity around the player review process. Explain and clarify the player review process to parents and make the selection criteria obvious so that there can be no confusion between a review/lessons learned process, and selection disappointment. Publish the parameters of the player review process on the website.

4. Clearly delineate between the national system and the world class system and communicate those delineations publicly. A world-class high performance programme should be criteria based, and naturally self-selecting. Decide on a future role for selectors and at what level they should be involved – junior/ladies/senior – if at all. Define when a selection decision rests with the High Performance Manager and make that definition and the programme definition public knowledge.
4. Work hard to align the Board and the HP Programme, specifically undertaking the following activities:
  - Educate the Board on what constitutes High Performance, through the introduction of external speakers to present to the Board (e.g. Sport Ireland Institute staff) and invite the HP service providers to speak to the board on their areas of expertise e.g. sports psychology, S&C, etc.
  - At times allow staff to deliver reports on their area directly to the Board, specifically allowing the HP Manager (or HP management team) to report to the Board on a regular basis.
  - If there is to be a HP Director on the Board, give them a clearly defined title and written role description, outlining the strategic and support nature of their role (as distinct from operations), and giving them an induction with the HP team.
  - Provide clarity on titles, specifically communicating that the head of the HP programme is the Executive Director of the programme and that any HP Board Director is a Non-Executive Director (and thus does not have final say on programme decisions).
  - Provide clarity on the role of HP within the golf ecosystem e.g. aspiration value of visible players can drive participation.
  - Seek to implement the National Governance Code, including a change of rules to allow men and non-golfers to serve on the Board. This will open up the Board to external influence, and with that possibly broader ideas, a greater contact base, broader decision making, etc. Invite an external recruit with high performance expertise to join the Board.
  - Refine the mandate of the HP Committee to improve its functioning, speed and ability. Reduce the number of people on the Committee. Ensure that all on the Committee are aligned on the performance mandate of the HP programme, have experience/knowledge of HP, and are comfortable with taking difficult decisions. Set up a regular meeting of that committee, which always takes place in person or by phone/skype at the same time (e.g. First Monday of every month at 0900), and has a clear agenda.
  - Work on people management including a more formalised and documented review process for coaching and HP staff and ensuring progression opportunities for staff and staff retention. Provide clarity to all staff around roles and process.

## **GUI - PREPARATION AND READINESS FOR THE GAMES**

### **Performance Targets**

The target originally set for Rio was to win a minimum of one medal. Medal prospects were hit with the withdrawal of Rory McIlroy, Shane Lowry and Graeme McDowell, however the feeling was that Pádraig Harrington and Seamus Power would still be capable of producing a medal winning performance at the event.

### **Training Camps and Training Environment**

Elite golfers generally have good access to resources and their own team around them assisting in preparation in the lead-in to events. This was also true in the case of the male golfers in advance of Rio, and their preparation was organized independently of the CGI Team Ireland set-up. Seamus Power however, having only left the CGI programme one year before, could be said to have been positively supported and trained in the Team Ireland programme in advance of Rio.

### **Financial Support**

The view of financial investment in the sport from Sport Ireland was positive, while there was a negative view of the carding system, and its impact (or lack of) on the golfers.

### **External Organisation Support**

Neil Manchip (national coach) takes part in the Sport Ireland Institute Pursuit of Excellence programme. Neil coordinates the emerging players utilisation of the services on offer through the Sport Ireland Institute. Overall there would appear to be scope to make greater use of the (non-technical services) on offer from the Sport Ireland Institute for the Team Ireland emerging talent players, should budgets allow. Given that the professional players train independently and access services privately, as mentioned above, support from the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI), Sports Institute Northern Ireland (SINI) and Institute, was deemed to be either satisfactory or not relevant.

### **Athlete Readiness**

Overall the athletes deemed themselves fully mentally, physically and tactically/technically ready for the Games, and largely ready for the Games experience and post-Games period. Again it was reiterated that it was up to the athletes themselves to prepare, and they did so, and were in good shape going into the games. It was noted that in the run up to the Games there were some communication difficulties with the elite players, due to there being numerous stakeholders in Olympic golf, and thus at times differing messages being relayed. The withdrawal of McIlroy and Lowry, and the late inclusion of Seamus Power and Pádraig Harrington, meant a lot of paperwork had to be repeated. The fact of having Paul McGinley as team leader, and his high level of preparation, was deemed as being very helpful – Paul visited the venue and travelled to meet all the athletes in advance of the Games. Paul's team and PA were particularly helpful in advance in assisting with the large amount of paperwork. However, better scheduling of golf in the Olympic year would have helped, as would have earlier confirmation of the team.

### **Leadership**

Overall the view of the leadership of the CEO/ Executive was regarded as being very positive. The view of Paul McGinley as team leader was very positive. From the point of view of the team leader, the biggest challenge in the preparation for the Games was around the administration (paperwork, registrations, commercial restrictions, etc.), and given that Rio was the first Olympics for golf that there was a steep learning curve. In future ideally this role of team leader is one to be taken up two-three years in advance of the Games, with a handover from the previous Olympic cycle's team leader.

### **Support from the NGB Board**

Overall the view of the support from the NGB Board was regarded as being very positive.

## GUI - GAMES PERFORMANCE

Both athletes were “dissatisfied” with their results compared to pre Games expectation. Whilst coaching support and support services on hand were very satisfactory, personal performances, and organization, logistics and management were at times inadequate. Team leader, coaching and support staff had a more positive view of the athletes’ performance, viewing it as positive and satisfactory relative to pre-Games expectations, with all athletes outperforming their rankings.

### Reasons that were cited as contributing positively towards performance were:

1. Paul McGinley’s influence as a team leader
2. The fact that golf at the Olympics was run by the International Golf Federation, and so it was very similar to a high profile event on the golf circuit, with the same faces, referees, and organisers. Thus the people running it were golf experts and got it right out on the course, which was a big comfort factor for the golfers.
3. The physios and doctors on site were available and helpful.
4. The fact of it being the Olympics, and the magnitude and patriotism of the occasion was cited, as was the fact of it being the first event of its type for modern golf.
5. Being around the other athletes.
6. The use of technical information to inform progression.
7. The course itself being brilliant and the set-up of the course excellent.

### Factors that were cited as having the potential to improve the performance are:

1. A trip to the venue prior to the games (note that the team leader had visited the venue in advance)
2. Personal coaches in attendance
3. Better travel conditions (direct flights and on business flights, specifically flights with a bed for long-haul)
4. Better motivational atmosphere in the Irish camp, in order to generate the highest possible feeling/goals amongst the athletes

Importantly, it was specifically cited that the poor quality of the bedding (bed and pillow) caused a flare-up of a previous neck injury,

which detrimentally impacted the on-course performance of one athlete.

Furthermore, the OCI having more budget to spend on the sport (or Ireland as a nation/ corporate Ireland finding more to fund the OCI and the athletes) was cited as having the potential to improve performance. The point was made that athletes competing for their nation should be treated like gold medal winners before they win a medal, and that you ‘reap what you sow’ in terms of motivating performance.

## GUI - GAMES EXPERIENCE

The overall view of the Games experience was mixed.

### Factors that were viewed positively were:

1. The overall Olympic experience and getting to ‘be an Olympian’.
2. Paul McGinley as team leader and his support and organization on the ground.
3. The fact of the International Golf Federation being the on the ground organizers and existing familiarity with their staff
4. Being around the Irish team
5. The ability to be able to afford to buy tickets through the international golf federation for other events.
6. Helpfulness of Kevin (Kilty) and Stephen (Martin) from the OCI, although clearly understaffed and under resourced
7. Golf itself was a great success at the Olympics

### Factors that were viewed negatively were both the village facilities and the Irish team camp, with elements cited being:

1. Second rate facilities in comparison to all other European countries. “The second rate and amateur atmosphere permeates to the athletes and doesn’t create a winning mentality”.
2. Basic accommodation - unclean and lacking fittings, including no kitchen appliances, kettle or TV
3. Very poor bedding, especially the pillow
4. Poor quality of food available in the food hall

5. Lack of support for athletes' families in terms of access and tickets causing tension which is passed on through the Irish camp
6. Lack of motivational atmosphere
7. The only Irish decoration being a tricolour – divisive for Northern Irish athletes competing for Ireland

### Team Ireland

There were a number of comments around the Irish team camp, especially that the organization was lacking, and also that there was a complete lack of Team Ireland atmosphere. The point was made that a team room was needed, as there was no central point for Irish athletes and nowhere for the group collectively to spend time together relaxing and not being alone, overanalysing performance. The point was made that simple elements like Barry's teabags and a kettle could have added a touch of home, and given a reason for athletes to congregate together and meet. It was noted that more thought could be given to how to develop a team bonding atmosphere at the Team Ireland camp, as they did in other nations' camps, but without it necessarily costing money. There could be an opportunity to take a mental break by attending other events, but there were no tickets available for the athletes, so this was not an outlet, except for those who could afford to buy their own tickets.

It was noted amongst all that a motivational atmosphere is really important for a competitive psyche and that this was lacking. Amongst the suggestions made to improve the atmosphere at the Team Ireland camp, and to tap into the emotion of representing Ireland at the Olympics, were:

- Organise an introduction at the outset amongst all the athletes, a 'meet and greet' and team-building motivational experience, which would cost nothing
- Have motivational messages on the walls
- Have photographs of the athletes, backroom staff and coaches on the walls
- Have an introductory booklet of all Irish athletes, backroom staff and coaches distributed to all the other team members on site
- Have better communications between

sports and athletes in advance of the Games, thus generating better integration at the Games themselves

Overall the point was made that as a nation we need to find more budget to get the experience right, and to create a proper atmosphere for the athletes to perform, whether that be through corporate Ireland or elsewhere. Team Ireland at the Olympics needs to move onto a more professional and commercial basis. The point was reiterated also that in a medium/ longer term view, we need to seek alignment under a common ensign, and not alienate Northern Ireland members of the team with the tricolour.

### Clothing

From a golfing perspective the New Balance gear was adequate in some areas and not in others. The shirts and bags were okay, but the raingear was inadequate as the sizing was wrong (too baggy, no hood, not waterproof). There were no umbrellas or headcovers provided. The caddy also only got a few items of clothing and no bag, and ideally would have been treated the same as the athlete in terms of gear provided.

## GUI - STRATEGIC REFLECTIONS ON THE HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME

### NGB structure

The provincial branches of the GUI work with junior players. From the ages of 16-22, the best players enter into an elite programme, based at the National Training Centre at Carton House. The best players emerging from the elite programme, circa eight to twelve players, get CGI 'Team Ireland' support. The Team Ireland players get access to the Sport Ireland Institute and Sport Institute of Northern Ireland (SINI) services. It is likely that numbers on the Team Ireland programme will be maintained or reduced.

A major consultation has taken place over the last year with branches, coaches, and players to develop a more streamlined development process for HP players, and to structure the NGB accordingly behind that. A 'Strawman' model has been presented to the branches

and the union. This Strawman model is based on a HP system, with the pathway ending at the highest possible (professional) level, but there is still some discomfort amongst the 'clubmen' who would prefer to see a pathway that ends in the highest possible elite amateur level (national level). Overall there is an appetite for change, and an acceptance of the changes proposed.

### **Finances**

To date there has been equal funding amongst the provinces to underpin the HP programme.

### **HP Committee**

The GUI has a HP Committee at the moment. There is a proposal to form a 'Strategic Leadership Group' comprised of the National Coach, Performance Manager, and Lead Coach in each Branch. At present, there is no proposal to disband the HP Committee.

### **Player Pathway and Talent ID**

The strategic review outlined the earlier stages of the player pathway as the major weakness within the GUI HP programme. It showed that the regional and national programmes were not joined up and were effectively operating as five separate systems, lacking a single general objective and mission. Talent identification was being undertaken by five different systems at best, or not at all at worst, and was geared at having a team for the interprovincial championships rather than HP players. Each province had the same quota/total number of players, despite some provinces being much bigger than others.

The intention with the Strawman structure is to have a system that works best for the players, but whilst being sensitive to the requirements of the regions. The new system will have entry to the emerging talent programmes based on competencies rather than quotas, and with lower overall numbers. It envisages a player pathway, starting with player recruitment (age 7+) and player development (age 9+) at club level, talent screening (age 11+) and development (age 12+) at branch level, and talent confirmation (age 15+) at national level. This would then feed into the HP programme (age 16+) and then onto the Team Ireland emerging professionals at CGI level.

Elsewhere it was noted that the quality of players emerging through the Irish system is very high, possibly due to the high number of quality tournaments that junior and underage players have access to domestically. The overall number of junior players may be dropping, but not the quality, with the pipeline for the next decade looking strong.

Perception of the Team Ireland programme is very positive, with it being cited as a major support to athletes turning professional, from the point of view of funding, support and access to services. Elsewhere it was noted that the support when players leave the elite amateur system and into the junior professional system could be better, with better funding and ideally a dedicated resource/team leader for players making that transition.

### **Management and coaching**

The strategic review of the regional and national systems also showed that coaching has been very inconsistent throughout the country. There was a lack of correct recruitment of coaches, and lack of job specs for the coaches. Currently all coaches are Level 2 coaches, but the intention is to have all trained as Level 3 coaches.

The intention under the new system is that there will be a lead coach in each province, a national coach, and a HP programme manager, so in total a team of six looking after high performance management and coaching. Both the national coach and the HP programme manager will report directly into the CEO. The CEO in turn will report into the Board on high performance.

### **Training Centres/Camps**

There is a National Training Centre at Carton House for the Team Ireland players, with the national coach based there. A weakness of the system to date has been the lack of connectivity between the national centre and the branches, and this is set to change under the new system, with more opportunities for emerging talent from the regions to visit the national training centre, and likewise for camps in the regions.

**Services**

Sport Ireland are perceived as having been very helpful to the HP side of golf, while there have been less dealings with SINI. The OCI were extremely helpful in the introduction to the Olympics. The Sport Ireland Institute is seen as not having had much impact and not being a great fit for golf, with the players on the road so much.

**GUI - NGB GOVERNANCE OF HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME****Board**

The view from within the GUI is one of satisfaction with the High Performance governance. Board member's understanding of the HP programme, alignment with the HP programme, and oversight of the HP programme, is all viewed positively, and the Board have always been supportive of HP. The Board contains three external recruits. However, there is also the view that there is probably not sufficient knowledge of HP at Board level, and there is a certain lack of strategic leadership. Ideally there would be somebody with knowledge of HP on the Board. A collaborative approach will be needed over the next while, in order to implement the 'Strawman' HP model, whilst still being sensitive to the needs of the provinces.

**Relations with International Federation**

Relations with the international federation are good and from the PGA and R&A there are no barriers to the HP side of golf.

**CGI**

CGI is perceived as having worked well through the Rio programme, with shared planning, shared high performance and a very open relationship, despite the differing cultures of the two organisations. The Team Ireland programme is perceived as having come on substantially under the remit of the CGI. It is hoped that the next iteration of CGI will be ready halfway through the next Olympic cycle.

**Training/recruitment/induction/succession**

To date there has been no set standard amongst the recruitment and training of coaching staff, with varying degrees of rigour applied, and some with no job descriptions, for example. The Strawman model recommends all current coaches reapplying for their roles, and from that point on having set standards and due process applied. The Strawman also recommends that the coaching programme and curriculum be set nationally, and that continuous professional development be compulsory.

**Reviews/Processes/Lessons learned**

Team leader Paul McGinley undertook a debrief with all the golfers at the end of the Games, and has been in touch with them since. Within the HP system to date, the reviews and lessons learned process have been based on winning the interprovincial championships. The Strawman makes recommendations on implementing a process driven review system, with annual programme review and performance appraisals.

## GUI - RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are my recommendations:

### HP Strategy

1. Define what the CGI is aiming for at the Olympics in terms of men's golf (2020 and 2024) and communicate that throughout the organisation and externally. Define how long it will take for the pathway to deliver medals and in what categories (if the IOC introduce mixed golf, for example). Use other external resources available (Sport Ireland Institute, other NGBs, etc.) to assist in that definition process.

### HP Programme

2. Continue to implement the recommendations of the Strawman, as per the process already underway. In so doing, also review the level and usage of support services along the HP pathway. Look at the opportunities for informal based learning, and integrating mentorship and informal coaching into the programmes. Assess what services could have an impact for the confirmed talent and HP programme players, their coaches, and parents.
3. Formalise the HP committee/leadership group around the leads in the restructured HP programme, with regular scheduled meetings, meeting agenda, and report structure. Communicate the HP committee/leadership group structure and role throughout the organization, to the Board and to the coaches, support staff and athletes. Define scope and decision making process of the HP committee/leadership group. (Note that there should be only one such group, whether called the HP Committee or HP Strategic Leadership Group, with title less relevant than form, structure and process of that group).

### Governance

4. Seek to implement the National Governance Code at Board level. The goal should be to become more competence based, rather than representation based. This will open up the Board to external influence, and with that possibly broader ideas, a greater contact base, broader decision making, etc.
5. Invite an external recruit with high performance expertise to join the Board.

## APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was completed by both the ILGU and GUI in advance of Rio 2016, giving a snapshot of the health of the CGI system in advance of the Games. The purpose of this was to provide Sport Ireland with a picture of where the sport was at leading into the Games, and also to inform the agenda around the post-Games review.

After Rio, an online survey was conducted of the CGI athletes, CEO/ Board members, Performance Directors and Coaches/Support Staff (between 16th and 26th September 2016). The results of this survey were written up in a report, outlining the key quantitative and qualitative data underpinning four themes. Those themes were Preparation and Readiness for the Games, Games Performance, Games Experience, and NGB Governance of the Games.

Using the above documents as preparatory documents, I conducted telephone and face-to-face interviews with the ILGU directors and staff, as well as service providers and externals, on dates between October 2nd and October 17th. I conducted interviews with GUI athletes, staff members and external service providers via skype or telephone on dates between October 12th and October 25th. The purpose of the interviews was to tease out in greater depth specific themes and to develop a richer understanding of the key areas critical to CGI's performance at Rio 2016.

This document is a summary of the information derived from all three stages above.

## APPENDIX 2: LIST OF THOSE CONSULTED

The following are those with whom I spoke as part of this consultation process:

Sinead Heraty, CEO, ILGU  
 Breege McCormack, Chairperson, ILGU  
 Tricia McDonnell, ILGU Board Member on HP Committee (outgoing)  
 Irene Poynton, Junior Development representative on ILGU Board  
 Gillian O'Leary, Coaching System Manager  
 David Kearney, High Performance Manager  
 Lee-Ann Sharp, Sports psychology service provider  
 Donal Casey, Parent of HP player  
 Daragh Sheridan, Institute of Sport  
 Patrick Haslett, Paralympics Ireland (external member of HP Committee)  
 Pat Finn, CEO, GUI  
 Neil Tunnicliffe, Wharton Consulting (Author of Strawman Model)  
 Paul McGinley, Athlete  
 Seamus Power, Athlete  
 Pdraig Harrington, Athlete



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND



# Gymnastics Ireland

Facilitator: Prof Craig Mahoney

## Ellis O'Reilly became the first Irish female gymnast to compete at the Olympic Games

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report should be read in conjunction with the summary of survey findings completed for Sport Ireland by the two respondents from Gymnastics Ireland, who were involved with preparations for the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

From the information made available to me, which included the pre-games predictions, the Sport Ireland survey responses from Gymnastics Ireland (GI) and a Strategic Plan from GI, it is quite apparent that GI is very professionally run, has established clear objectives linked to a performance development plan and has enabled the sport to be coordinated in a pan Ireland manner which has resulted in international recognition of the sports improvement across Ireland. Following a review of the data, together with 1:1 interviews with staff involved with the sport and the Rio Olympic cycle, I am confident GI has delivered a credible and appropriate performance for the 2016 Rio Games.

As a National Governing Body (NGB) it is apparent GI has a clear sense of direction, is well managed and has a professional oversight within an impressive Strategic Plan. The National Gymnastics Training Centre (NGTC) Partnership is warmly welcomed as

the fundamental element of a Strategic Plan that can and should deliver participation and excellence across the circa 20,000 members of the NGB. Over the past four-year cycle, the NGB has provided much of the resource that underpins the participation programme and made additional money available to supplement the athletes on a performance pathway. With a comprehensive events calendar, designed to provide competition exposure and intrinsically linked with talent ID, the sport demonstrates good cohesion between clubs and the NGB. GI is an example of a NGB which has through good CEO leadership and visionary Performance Director support, created a compelling infrastructure which has brought cohesion to the sport and delivered internationally recognised improvement in the athletes representing Ireland.

The two athletes, who attended the Rio Games (Ireland's second ever male and first ever female), performed to expectations and during the four year games cycle have demonstrated to the international gymnastics world that Ireland are improving and delivering consistent and competitive performances in elite level gymnastics.

In 2008 GI prepared a compelling case for the development of the new national gymnastics facility which recently won government support such that funding was made available for its completion as part of the Sport Ireland National Indoor Arena. The NGTC will enable year round training in a world class facility and together with associated indoor provision will enable competition (to European and World standard) to be hosted in Ireland for the first time.

This is a NGB that is very clear about its capability and has outlined an ambitious plan to achieve continued excellence. The Strategic Plan is a clear and comprehensive document making use of clear and credible evidence to build a picture of its development up until 2020.

The decision to support the creation of a new state of the art NGTC will be ‘game changing’ for the sport.

The fact that two athletes qualified for the Rio Games is testimony to the sound performance plan and hard work of all those involved in GI. The new training facility, alongside the clear evidence of elite potential athletes in the sport resident in Ireland, gives great confidence for more significant achievement in the future. This new facility, if complemented with suitable funding to support elite performance development will deliver results in the future.

## METHODOLOGY

The survey responses from respondents to the Sport Ireland on-line questionnaire provided the basis to understanding the Rio Games performance. Analysis of trends and data provided (which for GI was only two people, neither of whom were performers) gave a strong and consistent commentary on the games preparation, the games experience and the learning points. However, such limited data was insufficient to give confidence to the responses and the absence of athlete commentary was a major deficiency.

Following discussion with the Performance Director and CEO a series of 1:1 sessions were planned to coincide with a competition in Limerick. Interviews took place with;

- the Performance Director, Sally Johnson
- the CEO, Ciaran Gallagher
- the Head of Women’s Judging, Mairead Kavanagh
- the Head of Men’s Judging, Denis Donohue

## FINDINGS

### Games Performance

Two athletes represented Ireland at the Rio 2016 Games. Based on the pre-games expectations, the athletes performed to expectations. This was the first time GI had more than one

competitor at an Olympic Games, and only the second and third athletes to compete for Ireland at the Olympics, including a first ever female.

According to the Performance Director and the CEO the athletes were prepared as well as could have been expected for these Games, given the facilities in Ireland and the funding available. Both athletes spent much of their training time out of Ireland to gain better access to facilities.

### Games Experience

Both athletes were unable to respond to the survey distributed by Sport Ireland. According to responses from the CEO and Performance Director, in addition to feedback from the elite Judges interviewed, the Games experience was as good as might have been expected.

Injury is an ever present risk for high impact sports like gymnastics and the male athlete representing Ireland experienced injury difficulties throughout the cycle which will have had some impact on his performance at Rio.

The OCI role in getting athletes to the Games and support at the Games together with interaction over the Games cycle, was rated modestly. However, the OCI provided medical support during the Rio Games was fantastic.

### Strategic Reflections

GI has a very clear plan for participation and performance in gymnastics across Ireland and an unwavering confidence in the sports' ability to achieve sustained success. The NGTC is a key pillar in the plan to develop success and provide a facility that is more likely to keep performance athletes in Ireland during their development and achievement phases.

However, recognition exists that the absence of a high performance staff structure including a full time employed National Coaches to oversee the development of athletes who are chosen as part of a comprehensive talent ID programme linked with club coaching levels which may not be sufficiently well enough developed yet, are debilitating features of the current setup.

GI is acutely aware of the future potential of gymnastics in Ireland, especially with a new NGTC which can keep athletes in Ireland as part of training, study or work demands, during the development years. In addition, the enhanced reputation of Irish gymnasts on the world stage has been noted by elite judges and other competitive nations.

### NGB Governance of High Performance

The sport is developing a clear and comprehensive plan for the future. The opening of the NGTC will provide a wonderful catalyst for the sports future development. The creation of the newly developed National Performance Panel and its construction based on competency based membership will be a huge benefit for the next Olympic cycle. The review showed demonstrable evidence of a comprehensive governance structure with checks and balances typical of a progressive organisation.

Over the recent Olympic cycle the governance structure has overseen the strengthening of a participation programme that has given coherence to the 80+ clubs across Ireland and enabled the performance programme to produce exceptional results at age group and European level and given Ireland its first female Olympian.

## GYMNASTICS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. With the NGTC coming on stream as a resource for GI in the new year, the usage arrangements and intended plans for how clubs and performance athletes will use the facility are well thought through. The intention to produce more performance athletes who can consistently represent Ireland at major youth, age group and senior age international gymnastics competitions is clear. **Whilst Olympic performances will take media and public attention, they are not the only markers of success and care should be taken not to assume Olympic success is the only appropriate performance indicator**, though GI is confident that consistent Olympic qualification and representation should be achieved in the future.
2. For the sport to continue its improvement (one athlete at London, two athletes at Rio), an alternative funding model will be required. The stipends made available to the athletes during this Olympic cycle were very modest and required significant personal monetary investment to train, to live, to compete and despite these challenges, two athletes qualified. If GI is to reach its potential in the future, a more comprehensive funding model will be required. Having elite athletes supported with 5,000 – 12,000 Euros per year is challenging and the sport will have to decide how to supplement this if the circa 150,000 Euros over four years is all that is available for performance sport. With a membership of approximately 20,000 gymnasts across Ireland, it might be expected that GI could expect greater Sport Ireland support. Figures in the region of 300,000 – 500,000 per year seem much more reasonable if the sport is to achieve its Strategic Plan objectives. However, no sport should assume that performance sport should be fully funded by government. **The diversification of funding streams including sponsorship, NGB input and philanthropy should all be pursued as part of a multi layered funding model** for all sports, all of which GI is actively developing.
3. The sport benefits by having some internationally ranked Judges who have performed at Olympic, World and European level. These Judges have been hugely beneficial in bringing back to GI changes to the 'code' for judging in gymnastics and by participation in the international body (FIG) have been empowered to exercise influence on how the code might change. This enables GI to have some influence on the international governing body, but more importantly **allows the athletes and coaches early access to impending changes to the rules governing how points are scored in elite competition**.
4. There are some concerns about **how the performance athletes can have access to the range of services provided through the Sport Ireland Institute**, though this seems to be more related to the training base used by athletes, who hitherto now have lived and trained in England rather than Ireland due to training facilities and access to high level coaching. This was particularly noted for medical support, which in a sport like gymnastics is crucial.



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND



# Hockey Ireland



Facilitator: Eddie O'Sullivan

## First time an Irish hockey team qualified for the Olympic Games in over 100 years

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hockey Ireland is the governing body for the game of Hockey throughout the island of Ireland. It operates two high performance programs, namely the Men's and Women's National teams. In recent years both teams have advanced in the World Rankings, at the time of writing the Men's Programme is currently ranked 10th in the World and the Women's Programme is ranked 16th. Between Olympic Games both Men's and Women's teams compete in other international competitions such as the World Cup, Hockey World League, Euro Hockey Nations Championship and European Championship.

As a result of achieving higher world rankings, both programs compete regularly with the top ranked teams in international hockey. These top ranked teams are populated for the most part by full-time professional players, while the Irish National Squads make up a combination of full-time professional players based overseas and home base amateur players.

There are constant challenges around assembling the high performance programmes for preparation and competition. There is constant pressure on the home based players to secure time away from their careers to engage in more demanding schedules. Hockey Ireland continue to struggle to secure enough funding to properly staff the high performance programmes and finance the task of competing at international level.

The competitive space that Hockey Ireland currently occupies within international hockey has generated continuous stress on Hockey Ireland as an NGB. Qualifying and competing at the Rio Olympics has highlighted even further the challenges facing Hockey Ireland to continue to compete at the higher echelons of the international game.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide an independent, evidence-based review report to Hockey Ireland on their High Performance Programme, their preparation for, and performance at the Rio Olympic Games.

The report was initiated through the distribution of two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was a pre-Games assessment document and the second questionnaire was a post-Games online survey of athletes, coaching/support staff, high performance lead, CEO and Board.

Having evaluated the above questionnaires, the review facilitator carried out a number of interviews. Five athletes from the Men's Programme, five athletes from the Women's programme, four management personnel from the Men's Programme (which included the person performing dual roles of Manager and S&C Coach), two management personnel from the Women's Programme, three members of the Board (which included the CEO), and a lifestyle coach from the Sports Institute of Northern Ireland were all interviewed.

It is worth noting that each person interviewed was very forthcoming with their opinions and contributed in a positive and constructive way to the review process.

Interviews lasted an average of thirty to forty minutes and were based on the feedback from the Sport Ireland on-line questionnaires.

The report is constructed across four timelines in relation to the Games:

- The Qualification Phase (which included the Women's Programme)
- The Preparation Phase
- The Games Performance Phase
- The Post Games Phase

The report outlines the general feedback from each specific group that was interviewed in relation to each specific timeline.

There is a consistency of opinions across the groups interviewed and across the timelines, which would indicate general agreement on

particular issues. But there were also issues that were specific to particular phases, which would only be relevant to that particular group i.e. the Women's experience of not qualifying for the Games.

In the final part of the report a set of key recommendations are drawn together to outline a number of actions required to continue the progress that Hockey Ireland has already achieved.

## QUALIFICATION STAGE

### (A) Hockey Ireland Board

#### **General Feedback:**

There was a great sense of achievement when the Men's Team qualified for the Rio Olympics, but disappointment that the Women's Team came so close while failing to qualify.

One of the reasons identified behind the success of qualifying was the decision to take a more scientific approach to preparations for the qualification tournaments. This was borne out by the excellent injury profile of the Men's Squad during both the qualifying tournaments and Games.

After the Men's Team qualified for the Games it was necessary to prioritise that programme, which meant reducing support for the Women's Team. This strategic decision was made out of necessity to maximise limited resources and maximise the support for the Men's team in preparation for the Games.

It was accepted that the understanding at Board level regarding the requirements of high performance was an area that needs improvement. The fact that there was no High Performance Director in position, meant that both Men's and Women's high performance programs were essentially driven by the Head Coaches.

This absence of a High Performance Director manifested itself in a lack of communication between both the Men's and Women's programmes and the Board, also there was not enough strategic overview in relation to all

high performance units within Hockey Ireland. A High Performance Director could have also addressed the knowledge gap at Board level around high performance.

Financial constraints were an on-going consideration around all aspects of high performance and decisions were framed around their financial implications. It was accepted that had the Women's team also qualified for the Games it would have been near to impossible to prepare two high performance units properly to compete at Rio.

Due to financial constraints it was difficult to build a long-term strategic plan over four years and planning tended to be more short-term i.e. one year and even short-term plans were subject to changes. It was agreed there is a necessity to develop a long-term strategic plan involving high performance, which is communicated to both players and management. Having a clear financial picture before planning commenced would greatly enhance long-term planning process.

It was identified as important to work with Sport Ireland and the Olympic Council of Ireland to view hockey through the prism of a team sport, which has different requirements from an individual sport.

### **(B) Women's Programme**

#### **General Feedback:**

There was unanimous agreement among players and staff that the squad was more than capable of qualifying for the Rio Olympics. That opinion was reinforced at a tournament in New Zealand where the team competed with and defeated teams that had qualified for the Games.

Players and management felt let down by the withdrawal of support after failing to qualify for Rio, specifically the support of a sports psychologist. Some players found failing to qualify for the Games extremely difficult to process and felt abandoned in terms of support systems around the team.

The lack of contact time between staff and the players was cited as a major factor and stressor in compromising performance. This meant squad training was highly pressurised for time and there was a need to cram as much activity as possible into assemblies. This meant it was difficult to cover all areas of technical and tactical preparations with rehab and recovery also being compromised. Also, the lack of specialist coaches and support staff meant an excessive workload on coaches and management. The lack of consistent access to specialist support staff in the areas of strength and conditioning, sports psychology, nutrition and lifestyle, inhibited the development of the programme.

The team culture is strong but needs further development in terms of leadership. It was felt this could be enhanced with more consistent access to a sports psychologist.

It was also felt that the Board could be more proactive in securing sponsorship, promoting the game and building relationships with the player's employers.

### **(C) Men's Programme**

#### **General Feedback:**

Despite being happy with qualifying for the Rio Games there was general agreement among the players and management there was not enough contact time for preparation. Also, there was a lack of specialist coaches and support staff with the team, with some management required to fill dual roles.

This shortage of manpower put excessive pressure on management in terms of workload.

It was generally accepted that many of these restrictions were as a result of the shortage of finances within Hockey Ireland and the organisation had limited resources to support the qualification of two national teams. Of the specialist support that was available a substantial amount of the support came from the Sports Institute of Northern Ireland.

Also, due to limited funding it was difficult to draw up and hard wire schedules in a timely fashion. Some team assemblies were dependent on available finances, which made it difficult for some players regarding lifestyle management and in particular career management.

It was also felt that there was a lack of communication between the Men's Team and the Board of Hockey Ireland, which led to a lack of transparency around strategic decision-making. Also, it was felt there was a lack of engagement with the players to elicit their opinion before decisions were made.

It was also felt the promotion of the game in general could have been better during the qualifying process, in raising public awareness and sponsorship. Hockey Ireland could engage with employers to identify opportunities, build relationships and promote players.

### PREPARATION PHASE

#### (A) Hockey Ireland Board

##### **General Feedback:**

Funding to support the Men's Team was a substantial problem for Hockey Ireland in the build up to the Games. The funding from Sport Ireland was confirmed too late for planning purposes. Also, the amount of funding received was less than anticipated, which immediately created a crisis around planning and preparations for the Games.

The board acknowledged that it should have had a Plan B in place around funding in the event that sufficient and timely funding was not available from Sport Ireland. Failure to have a Plan B put Hockey Ireland in a difficult financial situation just eight months out from the Games.

The Board felt that the Carding of players in the build-up to the games would have significantly reduced the pressure on part-time players in preparation for the games. Also, the final Squad selection for the games should have been carried out in a more timely fashion to ease the stress for players and in particular

for players who were omitted from the final selection.

It was felt there was a lack of awareness among the Olympic Council of Ireland and Sport Ireland around the requirements of a team sport as distinct from an individual sport. Hockey Ireland expected more of a presence from the Olympic Council of Ireland while at "Holding Camp" prior to the beginning of the Games. Having said that here were no major issues reported at the "Holding Camp".

It was felt Hockey Ireland could have also tapped into more volunteer support from within Hockey Ireland to help with preparations for the Games.

#### (B) Men's Programme

##### **General Feedback:**

The general feeling among players and management was they worked well with the resources available to them in preparing for the Games.

It was strongly felt that the employment of a High Performance Director would have assisted considerably in the management of the High Performance Programmes.

The shortage of specialist coaches and support staff and some staff filling two roles made for a heavy workload on management. The use of more specialist coaches as part of the management team, and the access to more specialist support staff i.e. sports psychologist, nutritionist would have helped considerably. More engagement with Sport Ireland Institute for S&C support would also have helped.

Due to the financial shortfall around preparations there was a lot of pressure on players and management to generate funding to run the programme. This put excessive work and stress on both players and management, which deflected from preparing for the Games.

It was felt the shortage of sponsors should have been addressed by Hockey Ireland. The players and management were happy to participate in fund raising efforts but feel they should not

have been the primary drivers of some fund raising events.

There was considerable pressure on home based players to manage career and hockey commitments particularly during preparations for the Games. If home based players could have been “Carded” after qualifying it would have reduced stress on the players considerably. Also, had Hockey Ireland engaged with and built a relationship with the employers of the home based players it would have made it easier for the players to discuss time away from work with the employers.

It raises the need for Hockey Ireland to discuss a policy, which would encourage players to pursue professional hockey careers overseas as against struggling to manage careers as home based players.

Questions were raised by the Men’s Team about the allocation of substantial funding (€100k) to the Women’s Team to compete at overseas tournaments, even though they had failed to qualify for the Games. It was felt within the Men’s Team had the funding allocated to the Women’s Team been allocated to the budget for the Men’s Team it would have alleviated a lot of the financial stress on fund raising for Rio.

Also, there was no explanation offered to the Men’s Team as to why that funding decision was made in regard to the Women’s Team. That funding decision and the lack of communication around funding the Women’s Team at that time led to tensions between both programmes.

The Men’s Programme spent a lot of time building a strong Team Culture in the build-up to the Games. A large “Senior Player Group” (7-8 players) was formed with the view to opening up strong communication channels between players and management. It was felt by some that the Senior Player Group was possibly too large. The group adopted a manta of “No Excuses” given the challenges they were experiencing in preparing for the Games.

Some players did not regard the involvement of a Lifestyle Coach as the best use of resources. The Lifestyle Coach spoke to the Team on

numerous occasions, including attending the South African Camp and it was felt he did not fill the role of a sports psychologist and was not specifically relevant to high performance preparation. It was felt by some players the employment of a specialist sports psychologist would have been a better use of resources.

Due to the arrival of funding late in the preparations an extra tournament was added to the schedule. This created a number of issues for players, which included difficulties with scheduling time off work, the late announcement of the final squad selection and in some cases fatigue before even arriving at the Games.

The players requested a feedback questionnaire for the management, which was distributed near the end of the preparations and was too late in terms of effecting changes based on feedback.

## OLYMPIC PERFORMANCE PHASE

### (A) Hockey Ireland Board

#### **General Feedback:**

The feedback with regard to the performance of the Olympic Council of Ireland was regarded as poor. There was a poor induction process to the games. Ticket allocation and distribution was also problematic. There was no presence of a “Team Ireland” facility or atmosphere as seen with other national teams in the village.

There were also issues around the supply and fitting of team kit. The logistics of an eight-hour round trip bus journey from Rio to Sao Paulo was very demanding.

### (B) Men’s Programme

#### **General Feedback:**

The feedback with regard to the performance of the Olympic Council of Ireland was regarded as poor. There was a poor induction process to the games. The team felt that it was a burden to the Olympic Council of Ireland. Ticket allocation and distribution was also problematic. There was no presence of a “Team Ireland” facility, social hub or atmosphere as

seen with other national teams in the village. There were also issues around the supply and fitting of team kit.

There was a lack of facilities for the team such as a team room and the use of bicycles to access facilities around the Olympic Village. The players calculated they needed to walk 12km each day to travel from their accommodation to meals etc. Athletes from other countries had the use of bicycles to move around the Olympic Village but the team were told by the Olympic Council of Ireland that it would not be possible to supply bicycles. The players felt that walking 12km each day was unhelpful to preparations in a tournament environment. It was felt that in general the Olympic Council of Ireland were not equipped to deal with the requirements of a team competing at the Olympics.

Hockey Ireland, were regarded by the team and management, to have done everything within their power to help the team perform at the Games. But they could have engaged more with social media to report on the progress of the team during the tournament.

Ireland competed in Pool B of the Olympic Tournament alongside Netherlands, Germany, Argentina, India and Canada.

**The team results were as follows:**

### **Game 1: Ireland 2–3 India**

In terms of qualifying for the quarter-finals of the tournament, this was a must win game. A victory over India combined with the victory over Canada would have ensured qualification for the knock-out stages of the tournament. Despite losing to a team ranked 7th in the world it was felt that a lack of accuracy in execution was the difference between victory and defeat. There was also regret about not challenging a disallowed goal that on reflection would have been allowed if challenged and that would have changed the dynamics of the game. Ireland were exposed on their short corner defence conceding 3 goals and felt it was a game that slipped away through a lack of accuracy.

### **Game 2: Ireland 0–5 Netherlands**

It was a disappointing result against the 2nd

ranked team in the world and the score line did not reflect the effort by the team. Ireland could have score a couple of goals except for some excellent saves by the Dutch goalkeeper. The result was a reminder to the team that mistakes would be punished harshly at this level and the team would have to take the result on the chin and bounce back for the game against Germany.

### **Game 3: Ireland 2–3 Germany**

This was a much better performance than the game against the Netherlands, even though Germany are ranked at 3rd in the world. Level 1-1 at half-time Ireland fell behind 3-1 conceding 2 goals in four minutes. Ireland scored a second goal with under two minutes remaining and Germany ran down the clock to victory. Despite the improved performance, overall the management and players were disappointed with the loss but happy with the effort.

### **Game 4: Ireland 4–2 Canada**

A victory over Canada was seen as a basic requirement for the Games. Ireland were comfortably leading 3-0 at half-time, but allowed Canada to dominate the second half. Canada scored two second half goals and almost equalised before Ireland scored a fourth goal to seal the victory. Having taken control of the game in the first half it was disappointing to leave Canada take control of the 2nd half. But there was satisfaction that the primary objective of a win over Canada was achieved.

### **Game 5: Ireland 2–3 Argentina**

The victory over Canada, along the results of other teams in the pool games, meant a win over 6th ranked Argentina would qualify Ireland for the knock-out stages of the tournament. Ireland performed well and were level 2-2 with just ten minutes remaining. Ireland were under immense pressure before finally conceding a third goal. It was regarded as an excellent performance and a game, with some luck, that Ireland could have won.

The general opinion of players and management was the team performed to its seeding for the tournament and beat Canada, which was the victory they targeted before the tournament. But there was some

disappointment also that the possibility of reaching the knock-out stages was missed out on.

Due to the pressure of performing at the Olympics for the first time it was felt that having a sports psychologist as part of the management team would have been very helpful to players. But the sports psychologist would have been required to work with the team during the qualification and preparation phases for the Games.

The players were generally happy with the tactical strategies employed during the tournament, but felt the execution was not at the required level. There were some reservations about the introduction of some new tactical adjustments introduced by the coach during the tournament. Some players felt it was unnerving at that stage of the tournament. It was felt that coaches were overworked due to a lack of support staff and time management was an on-going issue and that had an impact on preparations.

Expectations of players and management were aligned but it was felt some players struggled with the magnitude of the occasion, which contributed to technical inaccuracies in performance. Team culture was also eroded somewhat during the course of the tournament and the management did not engage with the Player Leadership Group as often as it had during the preparation phase for the Games. Most of the communication with the players during the Games was carried out through the team captain. This lack of engagement with Senior Players may have been a result to the time pressures on a small and overworked management team with inadequate support staff.

## POST OLYMPIC PERFORMANCE PHASE

### (A) Hockey Ireland Board

#### **General Feedback:**

It was suggested that there should have been a Hockey Ireland reception with the team to recognise the achievement of participating in the Olympics and put closure around the event. But the logistics around such an event proved difficult as after the Games as players were immediately returning to work or taking a holiday. But it was acknowledged that it is a concept that could be looked at again even if the event was hosted as long as a month after the Games.

### (B) Men's Programme

#### **General Feedback:**

Players felt it would have been worthwhile to have an event to recognise the achievement of participating in the Olympics and put closure around the Games. Despite the logistic complications with players returning to work and taking holidays, it would be worthwhile scheduling an event even a month after the Games. But the event would need to be scheduled as part of the overall Olympic plan well in advance of the Games.

Players were medically signed off after the tournament and confirmed the excellent injury profile during the qualification and preparation phases was retained during the Games.

## GENERAL SUMMARY

It was generally agreed that there is a need to upskill the Board in relation to the High Performance Programme and develop communication channels between the High Performance Programmes and the Board.

There was a strong feeling that the Olympic Council of Ireland and Sport Ireland were not aligned with the requirements of a team sport. This manifested itself both during the preparations for the Games and during the Games.

Finance to support both Men's and Women's teams, especially since their improved world ranking, is a constant struggle. In addition, Olympic qualification exerted further financial pressure on Hockey Ireland.

The lack of available funding also resulted in a shortage of specialist coaches, support coaches, service providers, and contact time between management and players in both programmes. This resulted in an excessive workload on management and in some cases members of management had to fulfil two roles. More specialist coaches on staff would have taken pressure off the coaches by spreading the workload. It is also believed that additional support staff such as a Sports Psychologist and a Nutritionist would have aided preparations considerably. Furthermore, availability of more finance would have enabled more contact time with both Men's and Women's Programmes.

Having accepted that more funding is necessary to drive both high performance programmes, it was suggested that Hockey Ireland could do more to increase finances by being more proactive in promoting the profiles of international players, and seeking sponsorship.

It was also suggested that Hockey Ireland should build relationships with employers of national team players in order to identify how to best support players' work and hockey commitments.

It was unanimously agreed that the appointment of a High Performance Director would help address many issues around communication, management, planning, and strategy implementation within Hockey Ireland.

As previously mentioned, the Board can benefit from further understanding the demands of high performance. In some cases, it may be useful to consult players in relation to decisions on the high performance programmes.

During the Games there was general criticism of the Olympic Council of Ireland on a number of issues. On arrival at the Olympic Village, it was felt that the induction for players was

insufficient and there was an inability to resolve problems that did not exist for other national teams. There were issues with kit allocation and sizing before the games and allocation and access to tickets during the Games. Moreover, there was no effort to create a venue for "Team Ireland", as other countries did, and no social hub for athletes to meet and interact. A particular issue that was specific to hockey was the lack of an appropriate meeting room for team meetings.

Overall, the Men's Team were satisfied with their performance at the Games. The lack of support staff and excessive pressure on management made time-keeping around training and meetings problematic on occasion. In addition, the team culture and communication with the leadership group, which had been strong, may have been eroded somewhat during the Games.

Finally, it was suggested that Hockey Ireland should explore the possibility of scheduling a post-Games event in advance of future Games.

## HOCKEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Governance

- Align Hockey Ireland's vision with Sport Ireland and the Olympic Council of Ireland with regard to the requirements of a high performance team sport
- Improve awareness at Board level regarding the demands of High Performance
- Examine the possibility of improving communication between the Board and the High Performance Programme
- Consider the possibility of including player representatives in strategic decision making around high performance
- Source more funding and sponsorship to drive the High Performance Programmes
- The Board should become the primary driver in fund raising while using the high performance players as a support mechanism
- Examine the possibility of marketing hockey more through the use of social media to promote the game, particularly around important tournaments
- Examine the possibility of drawing more on volunteer support from within Hockey Ireland

### 2. High Performance Strategy

- Appoint a High Performance Director to manage all aspect of high performance which also includes communicating regularly with the Board regarding on-going progress and developments within the High Performance Programme
- Develop a four-year strategic plan for the Olympic Cycle with specific goals for each block of the programme
- Create more contact time between the players and coaches in the form of squad assemblies and test games
- Continue to improve communication within the HP Programme and with the Board
- Develop a policy decision with regard to international players advancing their hockey careers through playing professionally overseas or remaining within the domestic game in Ireland
- Examine the possibility of engaging with and building relationships between Hockey Ireland and the employers of home based international players

### 3. High Performance Investment

- Avail of continued and on-going support from the Sport Ireland and the Sports Institute of Northern Ireland
- Examine the possibility of Carding home based players if qualification for Tokyo is successful
- Supply more specialist coaches to both Men's and Women's Programmes
- Supply more support staff on an ongoing basis to both the Men's and Women's Programmes in the form of S&C, Sports Psychology, Nutrition and Lifestyle Management

### 4. Management

- Improve planning efficiency around high performance in order to minimise adjustments to the programme
- Review the development of Player Culture and the Senior Player groups
- Further examine the cause of the erosion of Team Culture during the Olympic Tournament
- Ensure continued engagement by the coaches with the Player Leadership Groups
- Set up timely feedback channels between management and players well ahead of tournament games

### 5. Coaching

- Schedule more assembly time for the Men's and Women's programmes and specifically more test games against high level opposition
- Employ more specialist coaches to spread the workload of the coaching staff
- Utilise more support staff on an ongoing basis in S&C, Sports Psychology and Lifestyle
- Use assembly time to develop team culture and hardwire tactical strategies in advance of major tournaments



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND





HORSE SPORT IRELAND

# Horse Sport Ireland

Facilitator: Nancy Chillingworth

Jonty Evans finished **9th** at the Olympic Games in the Individual Eventing competition

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) qualified 6 riders for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games and 1 rider for the Paralympic Games. The squads were made up of an Eventing Team of four riders, one Show Jumping rider, one Dressage rider and one Para-Equestrian rider. Performances across the teams were mixed. Both Judy Reynolds and Jonty Evans exceeded their targets in Individual Dressage and Eventing, respectively. The Dressage and Show Jumping elements of the Eventing team were successful. Greg Broderick's result in Individual Show Jumping was below expectation and the cross country element of the Eventing team was disappointing. Performance at the Paralympic Games was also below expectation for Helen Kearney.

HSI has effected positive change over the course of the cycle, specifically through the consistent development of the Olympic programmes for pony, junior and young rider levels. Although transition from young rider to senior level is still quite slow, there is evidence of some progress in this area. The next step is to establish clearly aligned rider and horse talent pathways with performance markers at each level.

Investment presents a challenge for such an expensive sport. While Show Jumping and, to a lesser extent, Dressage are associated with large prize monies, Eventing is not. Investment by an anonymous donor provided direct financial

support to Eventing in the lead into Rio enabling them to focus on preparation and performance. There was a strong sense of team identity within the Eventing Team amongst riders and support staff which should be continued and nurtured. The programme, management and coaching team were praised by the riders. Rider lifestyle remains an area which could be targeted. Some improvements have occurred, however it requires a more systemic culture shift at all levels.

There is more evidence of rider engagement with the programmes but Dressage and Show Jumping are still characterised by a very individualised set up. HSI needs to look at a system which supports individual riders in their own support hubs which still fostering a sense of Irish Team identity and shared objectives. The development of an overarching high performance strategy designed to ensure consistency of approach and clarity of purpose across all Olympic and Paralympic disciplines with Para-equestrian brought fully within the HSI high performance (HP) framework would assist with this. In line with a clear high performance strategy, the adoption of a Performance Director (PD) model within the sport, with clarity of roles and responsibilities is the logical next step to drive performance excellence across all disciplines.

## INTRODUCTION

As part of its Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic review, Sport Ireland commissioned individual reviews into each of the participating sports. A panel of approved facilitators was appointed by Sport Ireland and NGBs could select from that list. The final report was approved by the NGB prior to being submitted to Sport Ireland for inclusion in the overall Rio 2016 Review.

## METHODOLOGY

The review methodology was devised by Sport Ireland and advised to Damian McDonald, CEO, Horse Sport Ireland (HSI). It included the following:

- Confidential on-line surveys were completed by members of the Horse Sport team (including people who had an important role in the preparation for the Games but were not in Rio) as part of a wider Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Review. The Olympic survey was run from the 16th – 26th September 2016 and the Paralympic survey from the 6th – 12th October 2016. There were four separate surveys for:
  - Athletes
  - Coaching/Support Staff
  - Performance Director (PD)
  - CEO/Board Members

In Horse Sport, the surveys were issued to 8 athletes, 11 coaching/support staff, 2 Team Managers (TM) and 4 CEO/board members. Responses were received from 5 athletes, 7 coaching/support staff, 1 TM and 2 CEO/board member. A report detailing summary group data, qualitative analysis and indicating outliers, was compiled from the survey and made available to the facilitator for further analysis.

- The online surveys for athletes, coaching /support staff and PDs focused on a number of key areas relating to preparation and readiness, performance and Games experience. The survey for the CEO/Board Members focused on governance and oversight of the High Performance (HP) programme.

The focus elements in the athlete and staff surveys included:

1. Support elements in the year leading into the Games
2. Support from relevant organisations in the year leading into the Games
3. Daily training programme
4. Performance programme effectiveness
5. Games readiness
6. Athlete performance
7. Coaching performance
8. Support team performance
9. Games organisation & logistics
10. Games experience and Post-Games experience

- Based on the surveys, a number of common themes were identified which served as the basis for the interviews which were subsequently held. Given the timeline and the numbers involved within each separate discipline, a decision was made to interview everyone individually rather than holding focus groups. Everyone who had been issued the survey was given the option for an interview at a time of their choosing. In addition, a number of additional people were identified by HSI for inclusion. As a result, interviews were conducted either on a one-to-one basis or via phone with 5 athletes, 10 coaching/support staff, 3 Team Managers, 1 CEO and 3 Board Members. Interviews were held between the 8th – 28th November. The facilitator also attended a meeting of the newly formed High Performance Review Group.
- In addition to this, interviews were held with key stakeholders such as Sport Ireland, the Sport Ireland Institute, the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI) and Paralympics Ireland (Paralrl).
- The issues, findings and recommendations in this report are based exclusively on the information received during the process through
  - Confidential online survey
  - Interviews with key HSI personnel – athletes, coaches, service providers, PD and CEO
  - Interviews with key stakeholders.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Games Performance

| GAMES               | MEDAL TABLE                          | MEDAL   |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Judy Reynolds       | Individual Dressage                  | 18th<br>(Final)                               |
| Clare Abbott        | Individual Eventing<br>Team Eventing | 37th<br>8th                                   |
| Jonty Evans         | Individual Eventing<br>Team Eventing | 9th<br>8th                                    |
| Mark Kyle           | Individual Eventing<br>Team Eventing | 33rd<br>8th                                   |
| Padraig<br>McCarthy | Individual Eventing<br>Team Eventing | No<br>ranking<br>8th                          |
| Camilla Speirs      | Individual Eventing<br>Team Eventing | Travelling<br>reserve<br>(did not<br>compete) |
| Greg Broderick      | Individual Show<br>Jumping           | 50th  |
| Helen Kearney       | Individual<br>Paralympic<br>Dressage | 12th  |

### Eventing

Ireland qualified an Eventing team for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. Qualification was achieved at the World Equestrian Games (WEG) in 2014. Four riders (and one travelling reserve) were selected from a senior squad of ten riders and the team finished in 8th position at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. As a team, they had shown significant progression in terms of process since London 2012, where they finished 5th, and in Rio were hoping to improve on their placing with the outside chance of a podium finish. There were mixed results among the team with Jonty Evans finishing in 9th place, Mark Kyle in 33rd and Clare Abbott in 37th. Padraig McCarthy was eliminated and Camilla Speirs was the travelling reserve and did not compete. Performances in the dressage element exceeded expectation and the target was achieved in Show Jumping. Cross Country, a discipline in which Ireland is historically successful, was disappointing. The course was more difficult than expected as it was a challenging 4 star course when traditionally Olympic courses have been a strong 3 star. However, it was generally thought

that selection would not have changed if the course had been known in advance and that all combinations were capable of executing the course successfully, but did not achieve this on the day.

There was a strong sense of team within the Eventing Team and this was identified as an important factor by riders and staff. As riders compete individually for a team score, this team culture was developed over the cycle through increased contact at competition and squad training sessions. The team staff worked well together and were led very effectively by the Team Manager. The Team Vet was highly praised and the addition of "owner liaison" to the role specification of the Farrier at the Games took pressure away from the Team Manager, allowing him to concentrate on performance.

The sport psychologist attended the pre-Games camp in the UK, and having her available on the end of the phone during competition was considered as an important performance impactor.

The pre-Games camp was located in the Waresley Park Stud, Cambridgeshire in the UK and was considered a success by riders and staff. It was located within easy access of the airport and had world class facilities. There was some comment that more consideration could have been given to camp staffing requirements as the camp manager felt under resourced to manage the camp effectively although this pressure was not evident to any of the team members.

There was consensus that the Eventing team were extremely well prepared and focused on succeeding in Rio. Early qualification contributed to this sense of readiness and was identified as a key performance factor because they were able to implement a two year preparation programme without any concern around needing to qualify a composite team. There is some justifiable concern that the current vacuum within the system due to the end of the Games cycle and the unavoidable delay in the review process may hamper their ability to achieve early team qualification for Tokyo 2020.

### Show Jumping

The original goal had been to qualify a Show Jumping team, but this was not achieved and one combination slot was secured. The slot is allocated to the nation and, following the selection process where four riders were in contention, Greg Broderick was selected to compete at the Games. His result was below expectation based on the current form of the combination leading into the Games, and considering subsequent performance after Rio. Greg progressed through the first round but missed out on progression from the second round. He finished in 50th place with the Top 45 progressing to the second round.

Final pre-games preparation was in Ireland and Greg travelled straight to Rio from his own yard. The Olympic Games experience is a unique one and while Show Jumping is a sport where athletes are used to individual preparation, there may some merit in discussing the possibility of cross discipline pre-Games camps, especially when there is one athlete qualified within a discipline.

### Dressage

Ireland qualified one slot for Dressage at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. Judy Reynolds was selected and exceeded her target by achieving a personal best performance and finishing in 18th position in the Grand Prix final. Late qualification resulted in some challenges around logistics and planning for both the rider and HSI administration.

Judy is based in Germany and travelled straight from there to Rio. In hindsight she felt that it would have been beneficial to have met the Eventing and Show Jumping riders in advance as she felt quite separate from them. This was compounded by her decision to reside outside the village so she did not have a sense of being part of Team Ireland which impacted on her Games experience but not her performance. She did travel to Ireland twice prior to the Games for media engagements which was beneficial and highlighted to her the fact that it would have been good to have had more overall team interaction in the lead in to the Games.

### Para-Equestrian

Following an extremely successful Paralympic Games in London 2012 where Para-equestrian won two individual and one team medal, the sport only qualified one athlete for Rio 2016 due to changes in all combinations who had qualified for London as well as significant increases in standards internationally. This reliance on such a small number of combinations indicates a need for greater depth within the sport. Helen Kearney finished in 12th place and it is accepted that her performance at the Games was outside her personal best.

Helen did not take a personal trainer to the Games. The Groom assumed the Team Manager responsibilities and felt that she could have received a better handover from the Olympic equestrian team directly to her.

As the sole Para-equestrian athlete, Helen travelled to Rio from home and she was responsible for her own pre-Games preparation set up.

### Overall

At the Olympics, accreditation is always a challenge in complex teams such as those in equestrian sport. Each discipline has very separate support teams and ensuring these support requirements are met through accreditation is difficult. It was generally acknowledged that the HSI Team Lead did a successful job of this through accreditation transfers between support team members although there were still some complaints about the timing of transfers and owner accreditations. Much of this is out of the control of either HSI or the OCI so it is important to ensure expectations are clearly set (in writing) in advance of the Games to avoid unnecessary upset during the competition phase.

There was a sense that more could have been done by the OCI to promote a sense of team within the Irish Olympic team as a whole. The three disciplines were generally supported fully within their own set up but reports of the OCI HQ physiotherapy and medical support were excellent when they were required. There may need to be some more clarity of roles between discipline specific Team Managers and the

overall Horse Sport Team Lead at the Games as there appeared to be some uncertainty about responsibilities once the team was in Rio. At the Paralympics, the rider felt quite separate from the rest of the Irish Paralympic team and she had a perception that this was partly to do with having higher support needs and the additional complexities of equestrian as a sport. The HQ physiotherapy support was particularly praised and the use of the service throughout the cycle had been positive in terms of building familiarity.

Although sole selection by the Team Manager is widely considered the best option within equestrian disciplines, it is not without its challenges. In Eventing the Team Manager had an advisory committee to bounce ideas off but ultimately the decision was his. The Eventing team felt that the criteria were clear and the selection did not yield any major surprises. The selection decision in Show Jumping was more controversial with some backlash through social media. As the slot is allocated to the nation rather than the individual, selection is based on current form of a rider and horse combination. This was always going to be challenging considering there were four strong combinations in contention but HSI is confident that based on the criteria the selection in Show Jumping was correct. Although one cannot prevent people being disappointed when not selected, the media involvement highlights how important it was to have clear criteria to support the decisions.

While there was a strong sense of team within the Eventing team, there was a sense across the Olympic and Paralympic disciplines that more could have been done to promote a sense of an Irish Team spirit across sports either in advance or at the Games themselves. In general riders have had a positive post Games experience returning to their usual routines. However, in Eventing there is some sense of fear around where their programme is going following the end of the Team Manager's contract in September and the lack of clarity regarding the continuation of their programme.

## Programme Performance

### Eventing

In Eventing, there is a clear centralised programme which appears to be working effectively and which has really developed over the last two years. Following complaints by a group of riders in late 2014, a review was conducted by HSI in conjunction with Sport Ireland. The riders felt that the process of review was quite cathartic and most importantly, they felt listened to. Arising out of the review, Base Camp was introduced as a system of communication and is recognised as a useful tool for the dissemination of information as well as ensuring that riders and staff have a shared sense of purpose.

The team of Team Manager, HP administrator, coaching staff and vet work well together and the riders feel well supported and confident in the current set up. There is concern that by focusing on the disappointment of the outcome in Rio rather than on the process and the system, the good work which has been achieved over the cycle may be lost. There is good engagement by the riders in the programme at present and that needs to be harnessed. It is a group that is slow to trust, and with the current uncertainty, seeds of doubt are beginning to sow within this group. Whatever decision HSI makes on foot of this review in relation to the management and coach set up of the programme, it needs to be done quickly. In addition to valuing the specific coaches in Dressage and Show Jumping, the riders were also hugely positive in relation to the system of winter squad training introduced by the Team Manager. This was beneficial for a number of reasons including developing a strong sense of team and shared ambition as well as the practical benefits of learning from watching each other and receiving peer feedback. They are keen that these be re-instigated as soon as possible in preparation for the European Championships in 2017.

While the programme is working effectively and engagement from riders is good, there remains an opportunity to present a very clear picture of what good looks like from a system perspective. It needs to incorporate athlete lifestyle, as this is an area that frequently slips as riders

become more focused on the training of their horse and the business element of their sport. The inclusion of support services would appear to be rather ad hoc and viewed as an addition rather than part of an integrated performance plan. In the lead in to Rio, HSI developed a support programme with the Sport Ireland Institute but rider engagement was limited and there is the sense among the riders that training the horse and working does not leave much time for sport science. This would appear to be a cultural issue throughout the equestrian disciplines and would be worth exploring in more detail with the Sport Ireland Institute. Considering the importance of the business aspect and time management for riders it would be beneficial to work with the Sport Ireland Institute and the riders to develop an equestrian specific athlete support programme that also incorporates these elements. This would be a good time to investigate this as there does appear to be more interest and engagement with the current squad than previously. The introduction of sport psychology was also seen as hugely beneficial but this only really came into effect in early 2016 and would have been useful to have been fully integrated as part of the plan earlier in the cycle.

### Show Jumping

There are challenges with trying to establish a centralised system in Show Jumping considering the complexities involved in the discipline. The riders tend to operate individually within their own support set up and with their own owners. The current system indicates that the link with a "programme" primarily concerns liaising on entries and logistics for events and selection directly between Team Manager and rider.

There does seem to be a desire within the riders for this to change and for them to have more sense of an Irish team identity. This could be further fostered through increased links in performance planning on a squad basis. Improved annual planning and cycle planning would encourage rider engagement by demonstrating that they are an integral part of the process. This process would also assist riders with aligning their individual performance plans with the overall performance plan of the squad. Clarity around this and engagement with the owners is vital to ensure that everyone is working towards the same objectives.

Although a lot has been done with the current HSI Owners Programme, it appears that more could be done to help owners feel part of the programme, thus encouraging them to retain their horses within the programme set up. In such a complex system, the suggestion is not that this is an easy solution but that HSI could drive the discussion to look at how to include all people involved in the system in working towards a shared objective.

Rider lifestyle is an area highlighted for potential team involvement in Show Jumping. Despite some changes in this and improvement at a development level there remains far more emphasis on the horse as the main performer. As mentioned above in relation to Eventing, it would be beneficial to discuss the merits of a sport specific athlete support programme with the Sport Ireland Institute. Currently, any work in this area appears to be led by the riders themselves rather than being part of a systemic approach within the sport.

### Dressage

At present there is no centralised programme for Dressage at senior level. The programme is structured around individual riders with their own support set-ups. In order to access top level competition and horses, there is a necessity for riders to base themselves overseas which presents challenges to a more centralised system. There is a desire to work towards team qualification and if this is a realistic goal, there will need to be more emphasis put on a system which can support individual riders while developing the sense of team which has been effective in the Eventing programme. HSI has mobilised more of a system at pony and junior level and it is important that this is supported by a very clear performance pathway and transition framework in order to be successful. Realistically, young riders still need to travel to the continent to gain experience and have access to high level competition. As judging in Dressage can be somewhat subjective, being seen by top level judges in competition is also an important part of the preparation process for young and senior riders. With this in mind, it is important that the rider pathway in Dressage includes support for riders to make the transition and potentially travel overseas.

### Para-Equestrian

At present the programme in Para-equestrian appears to be somewhat stagnant. There is a centralised programme incorporating events and squad training but it is not part of an overall high performance strategy and operates annually without clear rationale as to its goals. The same coach has been in place for a number of cycles and there is no clear method of tracking coach performance or criteria for appointment of team coach. A review of this would be beneficial to the progression of the sport and to ensure transparency of appointments. As with the other disciplines, sport science is considered somewhat of an add-on rather than part of the programme to work on an identified requirement.

There has been progression over the course of the cycle at a development level with the introduction of a new coach but work still needs to be done a clear talent pathway with definite performance markers. There are challenges around sourcing horses of a suitable level and character for the specifics of Para-equestrian. It could be queried whether HP Para-equestrian has a high enough profile within HSI/PEI to attract potential owners and they may have missed a trick on not capitalising on the increased awareness of the sport following the success in London 2012. Given the low number of riders currently at senior level, there is an argument to focus on getting the structures and framework correct within the sport. This will ensure the sport understands what it takes to drive excellence within a long term model rather than just focusing on Paralympic qualification. This does not mean that riders would not be permitted to work towards Tokyo 2020 qualification on an individual basis, rather that the emphasis within the sport shifts.

### Overall

Since Rio 2016, the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) has voted to change team size from 4 to 3. While there is some concern over the fact that this will mean no drop score, the reality should mean greater competition for places in Ireland and increase the possibility of qualifying a team in Show Jumping and Eventing.

Links with the Sport Ireland Institute have strengthened over the cycle with the inclusion of two team managers on the Pursuit of Excellence Programme (PEP). The cross-sport learning was considered very beneficial, and it could be argued that extending this type of learning to the riders whereby there is shared peer learning with other elite athletes could assist with the culture shift required in terms of athlete lifestyle.

There is clear evidence that HSI has made good progress at pony, junior and young rider level which is focusing on a system of high performance through the introduction of protocols, review mechanisms and links with the Sport Ireland Institute and use of the National Sport Campus. There has recently been some conversion from young rider through to senior programme but this has yet to become systemic. The next step in this progression would be to ensure consistency of approach along the pathway in terms of clear performance markers and performance framework from entry level through to elite rider level. Another area to be explored is closer alignment between the horse and rider development pathways.

As mentioned above in relation to specific disciplines, involvement of all parties in performance planning is key to getting engagement and buy in with the programme. The development of a sense of Irish Team within Eventing has been successful and HSI should look to spread this across other disciplines and to include owners in the process. This will build an understanding of what is involved in being an owner of a horse on the Irish team as well as encouraging a sense of pride and identity. Across the board inclusion on the development of a plan gives everyone a sense of ownership that can also feed in to the development of rider agreements for continued inclusion on the programme.

### Management Performance

High performance within HSI is complex given the fact that there are a number of affiliates involved. The current Board has put effective structures in place to support high

performance across the disciplines through the establishment of High Performance Committees (HPCs) for each discipline. Membership of these committees ensures representation from the relevant affiliate at a HP level. Currently the Team Manager reports to the HPC and the committee is responsible for investment decisions and oversight of the programme. In order for high performance to be given adequate consideration at the wider HSI Board level, it is important that the HPC's act as a sounding board for the Team Manager and then advocate on his/her behalf and the programme within the wider organisation. There were some questions about the level of high performance expertise within these committees and it could be worth considering the inclusion of someone with a strong sport performance background but from outside the horse sport sphere to strengthen them.

There appears to be a need for more clarity of roles and responsibilities across the system, HSI has evolved quite significantly in a relatively short space of time, however, to an extent is still playing catch up in terms of the protocols and procedures. The introduction of a Performance Director (PD) model could be seen as the next step. The practicalities of this would need to be teased out with regards to each discipline as each are at different stages. At present, it would appear that Eventing and Show Jumping are at a stage where it would make sense to appoint a discipline specific PD for each of them. To drive performance excellence within the discipline, the PD should have oversight of all elements of the programme and talent pathway (potentially rider and horse) and autonomy over their agreed performance budget. Considering where Dressage and Para-Equestrian currently sit along their progression and the cross over between the disciplines, HSI could consider the possibility of appointing one person to oversee the performance programmes of both disciplines.

While progress has been made across the disciplines, they appear to operate somewhat annually without a clear overarching high performance strategy for HSI across all its Olympic and Paralympic disciplines. HSI has recently set up a High Performance Review

Group which sits above the HPCs. The Terms of Reference for this committee should include the development of an overall high performance strategy for the organisation. At present, the Para-equestrian HPC does not sit under this group but it is strongly recommended that it does in order to ensure consistency of approach throughout the performance arena of HSI with clarity of purpose across all disciplines. The development of a HP strategy should include rider contributions in order to be successful. While changes across the disciplines are evident, there remains the need for a culture shift towards driving performance excellence across all areas of performance including lifestyle and developing a clear picture of "what good looks like". The creation of a high performance strategy could incorporate this from an overall sport perspective.

In Eventing, the Team Manager was widely praised by riders and staff and there is a sense that it has all come together in the last 12 months. His contract expired in September and there has been no communication from HSI since then regarding the programme or any handover. This is a sport where rider trust can take some time to develop and there is some concern that another change in leadership will bring it back to square one.

Para-Equestrian Ireland has recently voted to change its name to Para-Dressage Ireland to better represent its identity. It could benefit from increased links with Dressage Ireland in terms of awareness of the discipline, coach expertise and progression and access to a suitable level of horses. Previously, there seems to have been some reluctance to consolidate this relationship, but the change in name would indicate a willingness to engage at present and it would be worthwhile investigating how this relationship works within Great Britain. There has been little change in personnel in management and leadership positions within the Para-equestrian HP programme and it could be beneficial to look at a change of approach if earlier suggestions regarding a change in focus onto developing clear performance frameworks and structures are taken on board.

Horse Sport is a hugely expensive sport and despite receiving more than €2 million over the Rio cycle from Sport Ireland, performance cannot rely solely on this investment. HSI currently works to promote the sport and target potential investors. There is some comment that this could be further increased through the targeting of specific programme elements for sponsorship/benefactor. Equestrian riders are not part of the International Carding Scheme, and there was some conflict with the Eventing team regarding payment to the Team Manager rather than direct investment in their individual training programmes. Investment by an anonymous donor alleviated this pressure enabling direct financial support to the riders which made a significant impact on the team and riders' ability to train effectively in the lead in to Rio. Within the Olympic and Paralympic sports in Ireland, Horse Sport is one where there is the justifiable perception that medals are a realistic expectation which should make it a more attractive proposition for potential sponsors. This is also important in terms of future proofing the programmes. Annual investment from Sport Ireland causes a difficulty for HSI, as for many sports. An example of this is the current challenge around the cost of transporting horses to WEG which will take place in North Carolina in 2018. Achieving a four year financial commitment from the affiliates into the HP programmes is vital for this. It is important that programme sponsors and investors (excluding rider's individual sponsors) are channelled through HSI for transparency and also to ensure that effective performance based investment decisions are made.

Reviews currently take place post-championships and annually at junior and young rider level. At a senior level, debriefs tend to be more informal between Team Manager and rider, and Trainer and rider rather than part of a review based culture. The riders are keen to have a structure that encourages rider feedback and it was generally acknowledged that lessons could be better learned from a system that incorporates feedback from all members of the rider and support team.

### Stakeholder relationships

Horse Sport Ireland has generally positive relationships with Sport Ireland, the Sport Ireland Institute, the Olympic Council of Ireland and Paralympics Ireland. Sport Ireland considers it a strategically important national sport and one which can realistically target medals at World and Olympic/Paralympic level. The OCI are cognisant of the logistical challenges associated with transporting the horses and transferring accreditations between the three disciplines and feel that the two organisations work well together in these regards. HSI also appears to have a good relationship with Paralympics Ireland at a senior strategic level however, from an operational perspective Paralympics Ireland would like HSI rather than PEI take a more central role focused on driving performance excellence within Para-equestrian and ensuring that Para-equestrian sits fully within the performance framework of HSI.

Some concern has been expressed by HSI concerning a slight drift of engagement in the affiliates. There is a sense of disconnect between them and the performance element of the discipline. This may in part be to a lack of awareness within the affiliates of what is actually happening at an elite level.

Strengthening the high performance committees and ensuring effective reporting protocols between them and the affiliates and their membership is important to prevent a worsening of this situation.

Another key stakeholder group for Horse Sport Ireland from a performance perspective is the horse owners. While the relationship is predominantly between the riders and their respective owners, HSI also runs an owners programme designed to create a sense of belonging within the group. Although this has been a positive development it remains an area identified by the riders as somewhere HSI could have more involvement. In terms of initiatives, there could be more structured engagement with owners on the programme vision and development. Through this they may be encouraged to retain horses in Ireland and develop a greater sense of identity with the programme.

## SUMMARY

In summary, while some performances were below expectation at the Rio 2016 Games, there is evidence of strong progression within Horse Sport Ireland in terms of performance programmes. The next step in this progression is the development of a high performance strategy for the organisation incorporating Olympic and Paralympic disciplines and the adoption of the Performance Director model.

## HORSE SPORT IRELAND RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Contact the riders as soon as possible to explain the current position of their programmes to ensure confidence in the continuation of support and provision.
2. Develop an overarching high performance strategy for Horse Sport in Ireland incorporating Olympic and Paralympic disciplines ensuring that HP Para-Dressage sits within the HSI HP framework.
3. Implement a Performance Director model within Eventing and Showjumping and consider a combined role across Dressage and Para-Dressage. The PD should have oversight of the entire performance pathway with clear reporting lines and autonomy over their agreed performance budget.
4. Identify the expected costs of the four year programme to Tokyo 2020 including expected travel costs associated with WEG 2018 and the new appointments recommended above to ensure programmes can be executed successfully.
5. Following the PD appointments conduct a review of all role specs across the system to ensure that they reflect the current set up and reporting structure.
6. Review the membership of the High Performance Committees and consider strengthening them with additional external sport performance expertise
7. Investigate the development of a rider support programme with the Sport Ireland Institute specifically designed for the uniqueness of horse sport.
8. Promote programme engagement through initiatives such as:
  - Implementing a system of continuous review that includes feedback from everyone involved in the relevant programme.
  - Involving relevant stakeholders in performance planning.
  - Including riders in the development of rider agreements.
  - Developing a sense of Irish team identity among owners.
9. Supplement OCI team member agreements with HSI specific elements such as expectations around accreditations and team member behaviour including an alcohol ban prior to competition and when wearing team kit.
10. Review the current investment strategy targeting specific programme elements which are suitable for direct sponsorship.

### Non Horse Sport specific recommendations:

1. OCI to consider more initiatives to promote a sense of Irish Olympic Team identity for Tokyo 2020.



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND





# Irish Athletic Boxing Association

Facilitator: Brian MacNeice (Kontinos Partners Limited)

A record **8** boxers qualified for the  
2016 Olympic Games

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Boxing has been, by far, the most successful Irish Olympic sport and has delivered over 50% of all medals won by Irish athletes (16 out of 31) in the Summer Games. Ireland sent arguably its strongest ever boxing team to the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. They returned empty handed with no medals. Whilst the challenge of winning medals at the Olympic Games continues to get harder, this outcome was a shock to all.

Was this a blip in an otherwise outstanding success story or was the Rio result symptomatic of underlying failings in the High Performance programme? The answer is unequivocally the latter. There are fundamental weaknesses that have been exposed by the Rio outcome. However, the potential exists to restore the programme to its former status as the best and most productive (in medal terms) Irish sports programme. Key changes are required to make this happen. This review highlights the core issues that need to be addressed and calls on those in leadership positions within the IABA and other key stakeholders to work together to implement the reforms required. Senior

personnel within the IABA including the CEO, Chairman and President are all in agreement that fundamental change is required.

The simple analysis would suggest that the failings in Rio were brought about by a combination of the departure of Billy Walsh as Head Coach to the programme and a string of unfortunate events including questionable judging decisions, a positive drugs test, and a loss of confidence during the Games as results started to go against the team. This would mask the real root causes.

There is no question that the loss of the Head Coach to the programme was a major blow and was, in our opinion, a factor in the subsequent outcome in Rio. However, the fault lines in the programme were present well before his departure. Also, at least one of the Irish boxers was defeated, in the view of most neutral observers, in a bizarre judging verdict. Aggin to allow this become part of the narrative distracts from the core reasons.

The areas that need to be addressed include:

- The absence of a dedicated High Performance Director since the departure of Gary Keegan in 2008;
- An over stretching of Head Coaches expected to perform dual roles of coaching and leading the programme;
- A lack of autonomy for decision making within the High Performance Programme;
- The slippage of boxer discipline and a commitment to the culture of high performance within the programme;
- The maintenance of accurate records of key boxer data within the programme;
- The need to expedite the move into state of the art facilities in Abbottstown;
- Access to high quality, well co-ordinated support service providers challenged to continually improve in the service of the boxers;
- A focus on developing more high performance coaches throughout the

system and the introduction of past HP athletes into coaching roles;

- Embracing the changed landscape of boxing especially with the emergence of WSB franchises.

Irish boxing is potentially at a crossroads.

A number of senior boxers have left the programme post Rio and will be replaced by a new wave of athletes. This has always been the case in Olympic cycles. The conveyor belt of talent exists, as evidenced by the continued success of the youth programmes internationally. If the key issues identified in this review are addressed and significant changes implemented, then the High Performance Programme can recover its status with the new batch of boxers. However, if the opportunity for change is not grasped now, then the decline evidenced by Rio and identified previously by the coaches in 2013 will continue.

## METHODOLOGY

### Review Scope

Kotinos Partners was commissioned by the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) to carry out a review of the Irish Boxing Team's performance at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. The brief for this review was to:

- Provide an independent, evidence-based review report to the IABA on their high performance programme, their preparation for, and performance at the Rio Games;
- Gather and report data and insight based on the review framework provided by Sport Ireland to all National Governing Bodies (NGBs) participating at the Rio Games;
- Make recommendations to the IABA based on all findings and conclusions from the review process.

### Review Process

The key inputs to this review process were:

1. Pre-Games assessment document completed by the IABA and submitted to Sport Ireland in advance of the Rio Games;

2. Post-Games online survey of athletes, coaching/support staff, performance director/lead, CEO/Board completed after the Rio Games;
3. Various documents relating to the planning and preparation by the IABA for the Rio Games including internal planning documents, High Performance reports, and reviews of the High Performance programme;
4. One-to-one interviews conducted with key personnel involved in the High Performance cycle from London 2012 to Rio 2016<sup>2</sup>.

This report is an independent review written by Brian MacNeice, Managing Director Kotinos Partners and was submitted simultaneously by him to the IABA and Sport Ireland on the 11th November.

A full list of those interviewed as part of the review process is included in Appendix 1.

## RIO 2016 QUALIFICATION AND PERFORMANCE

### Rio 2016 Qualification Process

The qualification process for boxers for the Games has become more complex with multiple qualification options through the AIBA Open Boxing (AOB), World Series of Boxing (WSB) and AIBA Pro Boxing (ABP). Ireland qualified 8 boxers for the Rio Games, one of the largest teams it has ever sent to an Olympic Games.

The first boxers to qualify were Paddy Barnes and Michael Conlan in April 2015 as a result of finishing in the top two of their respective weight divisions in the World Series of Boxing (WSB). In October 2015, Joe Ward's Silver medal at the World Championships in Doha secured his qualification. Michael Conlan won Gold at these championships and this opened up the possibility of another boxer qualifying through the WSB route. Steven Donnelly produced impressive results in the WSB and had finished just outside of the qualifying positions. However, his performances at WSB put him in line for qualification after two Russian Welterweights had to box-off for one spot. The vacant qualification place was then confirmed to Steven Donnelly in December 2015.

The next qualification event was the European Boxing Olympic Qualification Tournament held in Samsun, Turkey in April 2016. To qualify male boxers needed to finish in the top 3 in their weight division and the female boxers in the top 2. Brendan Irvine secured qualification with a Bronze medal, winning his Olympic box-off bout with a Bulgarian opponent. Likewise, David Oliver Joyce also won Bronze at these championships, defeating his Turkish opponent in the crucial Olympic box-off fight. No other Irish boxer qualified for Rio at this event with Dean Walsh (Round of 16), Michael O'Reilly (Round of 16), Darren O'Neill (Quarter Final), Ceire Smith (Quarter Final), Katie Taylor (Bronze Medal), and Christina Desmond (Quarter Final) all falling short.

Katie Taylor secured her qualification at the Women's World Championships in Astana in May 2016 where she won a Bronze Medal. Ceire Smith and Christina Desmond missed out on qualification at these championships.

Kellie Harrington won a Silver Medal in the LightWelter Weight category delivering an outstanding performance. However, with only 3 weight divisions in the Rio Olympics for Women and with Katie Taylor's qualification also secured, the available position went to the London 2012 Gold Medallist.

The final opportunity for qualification came at the World Qualification Event in Baku in June 2016. Michael O'Reilly won the Gold Medal at this event and became the 8th and final Irish qualifier for Rio. Dean Gardiner claimed the Silver Medal losing out in the Final bout to his Italian opponent. As there was only one qualification position available in the Super Heavyweight Division, he just missed out on Rio qualification. Darren O'Neill lost out in his Round of 16 bout and Dean Walsh lost in the Round of 32 stage.

The final make-up of the 8-person team included an Olympic Champion, two-time Olympic medallist, reigning World Champion and a group of talented boxers all with potential to perform well and/or medal. This was arguably the most talented squad Ireland has ever sent to an Olympic Games and is the largest team since qualification began in 1992.

In total there were a possible 13 qualification places available to the Irish team across the various weight divisions – 10 Men and 3 Women. The final qualification tally of 8 was a record return (in the era of qualification), however a number of other nations out-performed Ireland in terms of the number of qualifiers secured. No country managed to qualify a boxer at all 13 available weight divisions. Kazakhstan and Great Britain had 12 qualifiers, Uzbekistan, France, Russia, China, and Azerbaijan had 11 each, Cuba and Morocco 10 (only 8 competed after 2 boxers failed doping tests pre-Games) and Brazil 9. That places Ireland outside the top 10 nations in terms of number of boxers qualified.

**Recommendation 1: Set a target for Tokyo 2020 to be within the Top 3 countries in terms of numbers of boxers qualified and set an ambition to qualify a boxer in every available weight category.**

### Rio 2016 Performances

The performances of the Irish boxers at the Rio Games are summarised below:

| Boxer                     | Weight Category     | Bouts   | Result                  | Finishing Position of Opponent |
|---------------------------|---------------------|---|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Paddy Barnes</b>       | Light Fly (49kg)    | Round of 16 –v Spain  | L 1-2                   | Lost QF Bout                   |
| <b>Brendan Irvine</b>     | Fly (52 kg)         | Round of 32 –v Uzbekistan   | L 0-3                   | Gold Medal                     |
| <b>Michael Conlan</b>     | Bantam (56 kg)      | Round of 16 –v Armenia<br>Quarter Final –v Russia                             | W 3-0<br>L 0-3          | Bronze Medal                   |
| <b>David Oliver Joyce</b> | Light (60 kg)       | Round of 32 –v Seychelles<br>Round of 16 –v Azerbaijan                        | W 3-0<br>L 0-3          | Lost QF Bout                   |
| <b>Steven Donnelly</b>    | Welter (69 kg)      | Round of 32 –v Algeria<br>Round of 16 –v Mongolia<br>Quarter Final –v Morocco | W 3-0<br>W 2-1<br>L 1-2 | Bronze Medal                   |
| <b>Michael O'Reilly</b>   | Middle (75 kg)      | Failed drug test before Games   | DNC                     |                                |
| <b>Joe Ward</b>           | Light Heavy (81 kg) | Round of 16 –v Ecuador  | L 1-2                   | Lost QF Bout                   |
| <b>Katie Taylor</b>       | Light (60 kg)       | Quarter Final –v Finland  | L 1-2                   | Bronze Medal                   |

#### **Paddy Barnes**

Paddy Barnes was seeded 4th in the LightFly Weight Division and received a first-round bye. His Round of 16 bout was against the Spaniard, Samuel Carmona Heredia a boxer ranked below Paddy. He lost in a split decision and clearly was tiring in the final round. After the bout, Paddy conceded that the struggle to make weight caused him difficulties and left him lacking energy. This is an issue explored in more detail below.

#### **Brendan Irvine**

Brendan, the youngest member of the squad at 20, was making his debut at an Olympic Games and arguably was ahead of schedule by qualifying at the European qualifier in Turkey. Drawn against a tough opponent, in the Uzbekistan fighter Shakhobidin Zoirov, he was defeated in a unanimous verdict. His opponent was a classy fighter and went on to win the Gold Medal.

#### **Michael Conlan**

As reigning World Champion, Michael was seeded number one and favourite to secure a Gold Medal. He received an opening round bye and his first bout was a Round of 16 contest against the Armenian Aram Avagyan. A polished performance saw Michael secure a comfortable unanimous decision. His quarter-final bout against Russian opponent Vladimir Nikitin was to prove one of the most controversial fights of the Games. The verdict was given to his opponent on a unanimous

decision, however virtually all neutral observers were shocked by the decision. This bout, along with others not involving Irish boxers, resulted in an investigation being launched into officiating at the Games. Nikitin was unable to contest his semi-final bout due to injuries suffered in his fight with Michael Conlan and so claimed the Bronze medal.

#### **David Oliver Joyce**

David Oliver Joyce fought Andriue Allisop from the Seychelles in the Round of 32 stage. He won a tricky contest by way of unanimous decision. His Round of 16 contest was against the number 2 ranked boxer Albert Selimov from Azerbaijan. This was always going to be a tough battle and despite giving his all he lost out to a unanimous decision.

#### **Steven Donnelly**

Steven Donnelly was the first Irish boxer in action at the Games. Ranked 8th in his weight division he had an outside chance of a medal. His opening bout was against the Algerian Zohir Kedache. A strong performance saw him win comfortably on a 3-0 score. His Round of 16 bout versus the Mongolian Tuvshinbat Byamba was a tighter affair. He dug deep to secure a split decision and was one win away from a medal. The quarter-final fight saw him face Gold medal favourite Mohammed Rabii of Morocco. Having fallen behind in the opening two rounds Steven rallied in the final round but ultimately lost to a split decision 1-2. His Moroccan opponent went on to lose his semi-final and come away with a Bronze medal.

### Michael O'Reilly

Michael O'Reilly tested positive for a banned substance in a test carried out in Ireland before the Games. As a result, he was disqualified from competing at the Games. This matter is dealt with in more detail below.

### Joe Ward

Joe Ward was ranked 4th in the Light Heavyweight Division and as such a genuine medal prospect. He received an opening round bye before facing the Ecuadorean Carlos Andres Mina in the Round of 16 stage. Having received warnings in both the 2nd and 3rd rounds he went on to lose the bout on a split decision 1-2. There is no doubt this was a bout that Joe was capable of winning and a poor loss. His opponent went on to lose in the next round by way of Technical Knock Out.

### Katie Taylor

The reigning Olympic champion was seeking to become only the second Irish athlete to retain an Olympic title after the hammer thrower Pat O'Callaghan in 1932. Katie went into the Games as the number one ranked boxer in the division, however on the back of defeats at both the European qualifier and the World Championships. Having received an opening round bye, she was to face Finnish boxer Mira Potkonen. She lost a tight split decision 1-2 and ended her Olympic quest. Katie Taylor has won a staggering 18 gold medals in championship boxing in her career to date.

In total, 19 nations won medals at the Rio Games. The following is the final medal table:

| Rank | Nation        | No of Boxers Qualified | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|------|---------------|------------------------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1    | Uzbekistan    | 11                     | 3    | 2      | 2      | 7     |
| 2    | Cuba          | 10                     | 3    | 0      | 3      | 6     |
| 3    | France        | 11                     | 2    | 2      | 2      | 6     |
| 4    | Kazakhstan    | 12                     | 1    | 2      | 2      | 5     |
| 5    | Russia        | 11                     | 1    | 1      | 3      | 5     |
| 6    | Great Britain | 12                     | 1    | 1      | 1      | 3     |
|      | USA           | 8                      | 1    | 1      | 1      | 3     |
| 8    | Brazil        | 9                      | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| 9    | China         | 11                     | 0    | 1      | 3      | 4     |
| 10   | Azerbaijan    | 11                     | 0    | 1      | 1      | 2     |
|      | Colombia      | 5                      | 0    | 1      | 1      | 2     |
| 12   | Netherlands   | 3                      | 0    | 1      | 0      | 1     |
| 13   | Croatia       | 2                      | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
|      | Finland       | 1                      | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
|      | Germany       | 6                      | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
|      | Mexico        | 6                      | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
|      | Mongolia      | 6                      | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
|      | Morocco       | 10                     | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
|      | Venezuela     | 8                      | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
| 20   | Ireland       | 8                      | 0    | 0      | 0      | 0     |

### Rio 2016 Performances vs. Targets

The Pre-Games performance target set out by the High Performance Programme was to improve on the 5th place finish at London 2012 and become the number one boxing nation at the Rio 2016. This target of '5 to 1' was ambitious and would have meant out-performing other nations with greater levels of investment. However, this is exactly the scale of ambition that the most successful high performance programme in Irish sport should be targeting.

At London 2012, Ireland qualified 6 boxers and won 4 medals (1 Gold, 1 Silver, 2 Bronze). For Rio 2016, the number of boxers qualified was 8, one of the largest teams Ireland has ever sent. Going into the Games the performance target for the Team was set as finishing higher in the medals table than the 5th place finish in London.

The Rio Games promised much with high hopes for a minimum of 3-4 medals. However, the Irish team came home empty handed. The Games got off to the worst start possible with the news of the Michael O'Reilly positive test for a banned substance. Things got progressively worse with the Paddy Barnes defeat in part due to his struggles to make weight, Joe Ward's defeat in a bout he was capable of winning, the loss of form of Katie Taylor and the highly controversial decision against Michael Conlan. To say that the Rio results were very disappointing is an understatement. Ultimately, a return of zero medals from arguably the best squad we have ever sent to the Games was a disastrous outcome and a nightmare Games for the Irish squad.

There is no question that there are fundamental issues within the high performance programme that need to be addressed, as outlined within this review. However, the ambition levels of the programme should not be toned down based on the outcome of Rio 2016. The original goal of 5th to 1st should be maintained and used as a driver to challenge and question standards in every aspect of the programme. This target is a long-term target and will obviously be dependent on resourcing the programme to achieve this. The reality is that all of the other

countries we are competing against both have more financial resource behind them and far larger population bases to work off. It may not be realised by Tokyo 2020, however it should be used as a driving force to aim for in future cycles.

**Recommendation 2: Re-commit to the goal of 5th (in London) to 1st in the World in the future and use this to continually challenge every aspect of the High Performance programme to ensure World Class standards apply throughout.**

## THE RIO EXPERIENCE

### Pre-Games

The Irish team departed for Brazil on the 19th July. A pre-Games training camp was set up in a Naval Base on the coast line where the USA and Brazil boxing teams were also scheduled to stay. Upon arrival it was apparent that this location was not adequate. It should be noted that the venue was selected well in advance of the Games by the then Head Coach who visited the site and approved it as part of the preparation phase for the Games. The accommodation facilities were poor with cramped bedding, inadequate access to shower and toilet facilities, poor standards of hygiene, no access to internet and a working naval base with an active runway ensuring broken sleep for everyone involved.

The decision was made immediately to re-locate the team. An alternative option, in the form of a nearby hotel, was quickly secured and this became the accommodation location until the squad moved to the Olympic Village. Once this was addressed, the remainder of the pre-Games training camp went smoothly. The training facilities at the Naval base were fine and the Brazilian and USA teams provided good sparring opportunities for the squad and preparations went well.

The squad moved to the Olympic Village on the 29th July and there were no significant issues encountered with the OCI providing good support to the squad in settling into the Village.

### Issues during the Games

On the 4th August, the day of the draw for the boxing event, and two days before the Irish squad started their Rio campaign, news broke that a boxer within the squad had failed a drugs test in Ireland pre-Games. In our view, this had a major impact on the team and was the worst possible start to the Games. Michael O'Reilly was told of his positive test by Dr. Una May, the Sport Ireland Anti-Doping Manager. As per protocol Michael was not allowed to train nor have any contact with the team. He remained in the Olympic Village until the 9th August an unsatisfactory position given the impact it had on others within the squad. The IABA President, Pat Ryan, who is also Michael's club coach played a pivotal role in advising Michael throughout this period. This was not ideal and the handling of his matter should have been the responsibility of the team management exclusively. Obviously, the decision to remain over this period was made by Michael himself, and was based on his intention to appeal the decision initially, as was his entitlement. Nonetheless, the delay in removing Michael from the Olympic Village added to the disruption of the team.

On the 27th August it was announced that two members of the Irish boxing team and one member of the Team GB boxing team were being investigated for betting during the Rio Games. All three boxers were severely reprimanded by the International Olympic Committee for betting on the boxing competition. The two Irish boxers involved Michael Conlan and Steven Donnelly had like all Irish athletes signed agreements in advance of the Games covering their obligations re betting amongst other areas. The Olympic Council of Ireland was also reprimanded for failing to educate their athletes that they were not allowed to gamble on Olympic events.

Both the OCI and IABA had provided detailed information to the athletes on anti-doping and betting protocols in advance of the Games. No blame can be laid at the door of either organisation for not making the athletes aware of their individual responsibilities.

### KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED ACROSS THE HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME

#### Role of High Performance Director

The High Performance Programme was founded in 2003 by the Irish Sports Council (since renamed Sport Ireland) and the IABA. Gary Keegan was appointed Performance Director and was charged with the responsibility of setting the strategy to deliver sustained success in Irish boxing. As Performance Director he was credited with changing the culture of Irish boxing and laying the foundations for success that delivered a large haul of European, World and Olympic medals. After the Beijing Games in 2008, Gary moved on to a new role in the Sport Ireland Institute and Billy Walsh, the Head Coach under Gary Keegan took on the role in an unofficial capacity. In 2010, following an interview process, the then IABA President, Dominic O'Rourke was offered the role of High Performance Director and Billy Walsh was unsuccessful in applying for the role. This prompted the Irish Sports Council to withdraw their funding support for the role. Following the intervention from the Irish Sports Council a compromise position was established which saw Billy Walsh taking on the role of High Performance Coach and Dominic O'Rourke appointed Director of Boxing. After the resignation of Billy Walsh last year, the highly respected Zauri Antia, who has been with the programme since its inception in 2003, was appointed Interim Head Coach.

In reality, since the departure of Gary Keegan in 2008 the High Performance Programme has struggled with fundamental flaws in the leadership structure. The absence of a full time High Performance Director for Ireland's most successful sports programme is unacceptable. From 2010 to 2015, Billy Walsh was in essence carrying out the dual role of Head Coach and High Performance Director. Inevitably, this led to a compromising of standards. It is simply impossible for one individual to perform both roles to the highest possible standard demanded of a boxing programme aspiring to be the best in the world. The programme suffered as a result and some of the underlying faults within the programme were exposed under this arrangement.

Following the departure of Billy Walsh to Team USA in October 2015, Zauri Antia agreed to take on the challenge of performing the role of Interim Head Coach. The, already flawed leadership structure, was weakened further with this. Simply put Zauri was over stretched. In our view, this placed far too much strain on one individual and despite the appointment of Eddie Bolger and John Conlan as High Performance Coaches, this structure undermined the effectiveness of the programme. It should be noted that the coaches and boxers within the programme were agreed at the time that it would not be appropriate to bring a new person into the programme in a key senior role so close to the Games. Given the proximity to Rio this was probably a sensible decision, however the underlying issue of a lack of a High Performance Director was accentuated as a result. Everyone interviewed as part of this review identified this as a critical issue in the cycle from London to Rio. The absence of a formal High Performance Director with full autonomy for decision making across the programme ensured that both Billy Walsh and subsequently Zauri Antia were working under a model that undermined their effectiveness. As a direct consequence of this, the standards and culture of the programme that helped establish its success in the first instance from 2003 to 2008 were gradually eroded.

The programme still produced medals at International level in spite of this. After the 2013 World Championships in Almaty, when the Irish team won 1 silver, 1 bronze, had 5 fighters reach the quarter-final stages and finished as the 6th best ranked nation an internal review of the programme was carried out in partnership with the Sport Ireland Institute. Billy Walsh, as Head Coach, identified underlying weaknesses in the programme and challenged everyone involved to address some key issues. This self-review identified that the dual role of Head Coach and de facto Performance Director being carried out by Billy Walsh was "impacting on the leadership effectiveness of the Head Coach." Also the review identified that "there had been some slip in the culture of the programme since the London Olympics" as a result of the success of the programme leading to a degree of complacency and the "attention of the

Head Coach being divided across too many areas." Actions were identified to address these concerns. A High Performance Operations Manager was appointed. However, the core issue of over-stretching the Head Coach was never adequately addressed. Simply put, in spite of the continued success in medal terms of the programme up to Rio, until a dedicated High Performance Director is appointed in addition to the role of Head Coach, the programme will continue to be undermined.

The High Performance Director must have expertise and experience of high performance sport, ideally in a boxing context, however it is possible that the most qualified candidate may not come from a boxing background and might have experience from another sport.

#### **Organisation structure**

The lack of a full time Performance Director has led to some confusion within the IABA and across the programme with regard to roles and responsibilities. At present, the Chief Executive, is the 'Performance Lead' and has ultimate responsibility for the programme. However, the role of CEO is a demanding one and cannot give the High Performance Programme the level of time and attention it requires on a daily basis. Some of the responsibilities around planning and operations around the programme fall to the Interim Head Coach. However, the Interim Head Coach is the technical lead and is expected to be 'on the floor' working closely with the boxers in conjunction with the other High Performance coaches. This leads to confusion around this role.

Additionally, the skill sets required to perform the Performance Lead role and that of Head Coach are fundamentally different. It is very difficult for one person to master both. The likelihood of one individual being capable of combining the technical and tactical skills of a World Class Coach with the strategic management capabilities necessary to be a World Class Performance Director are slim. If the programme is to succeed it needs both. The scale and complexity of the programme is simply too large to combine these roles into one.

All those interviewed, were of the view that Zauri Antia is one of the best technical and tactical coaches in the world and his role within the programme since its inception has been a fundamental factor in the success enjoyed within the programme over the last decade. They believe he should be allowed to focus exclusively on his role as Head Coach and not have his impact and effectiveness in this role diminished by the demands of acting as the de facto Performance Director on top of this.

The complexity of the qualification process and the multiple routes to Rio qualification stretched the coaching resources within the programme to the limit. The team of High Performance coaches faced a punishing schedule of travel and training as they attempted to provide the training and competition demands across the programme. This in turn placed a reliance on the pool coaches to provide additional support, especially when some members of the squad were away in competition whilst others continued their training at home.

### **Autonomy of Decision-Making**

From the outset in 2003, the High Performance Programme has been plagued with issues of interference from within the structures of the IABA. The leaders of the programme have never had full autonomy for decision making around the areas of budgetary control, selection of boxers for training camps and competitions, and discipline of boxers within the programme. Combined, with the underlying weakness of a lack of a formal High Performance Director, this has de-powered the leaders of the programme and is a major factor hampering the ability of the programme to realise its full potential. The continued success of the programme from 2008 to date has masked this issue. However, Rio 2016 should act as the ultimate wake up call to address this decisively.

It is essential that there is disciplined budgetary oversight to prevent issues, as occurred in 2013 when a €70k budget overrun was incurred on the programme. Nonetheless, decisions on how the High Performance budget is allocated and spent should be the responsibility of the High Performance Director directly with adequate reporting and controlling from an oversight

body (see 5.4 below).

Throughout the cycle from London to Rio this issue of autonomy was prevalent. For example, at the European Boxing Olympic Qualification Tournament held in Samsun, Turkey in April 2016, two boxers, Michael O'Reilly and Dean Walsh, were involved in a serious breach of team discipline. Both boxers were sent home from Turkey, fined a significant sum of money and the coaching staff effectively dismissed them from the High Performance Programme. Given the serious nature of the incident this was undoubtedly the right course of action. However, subsequently, following interventions from the IABA Council and others, the boxers were reinstated to the programme by the Interim Head Coach and their sanctions reduced significantly. This undermined the culture of professionalism within the programme and the leadership position of the High Performance coaching staff. Many of the athletes and coaches within the High Performance team interviewed as part of this review were unequivocal in their views that neither boxer should have been reinstated. They felt that the two boxers did not deserve to be included in the subsequent training camp in Azerbaijan where the Interim Head Coach was asked to select the most in form boxers in their weight division for the final qualification event. Michael O'Reilly subsequently secured qualification for Rio at the final opportunity in Baku in June. The subsequent positive drugs test, which may have had a major impact on the team at the Games, may not have been an issue if the sanctions from the incident in Turkey were stricter. Without full autonomy for those charged with leadership of the programme to make such key decisions, it is inevitable that the culture and standards required of a high performance programme will, at times, be compromised.

In the post London 2012 Review, conducted by independent consultants Knight, Kavanagh & Page, this issue was addressed explicitly. They recommended that "the power of key IABA members or committees to either sanction or change HPP team decisions with regard to athletes selected entering (or not entering) domestic or international competitions is ceded in its entirety to the PD and HPP team."

Further they recommended that “the HPP team is directly and fully responsible and accountable for all HPP funding going forward.” These changes have not been implemented. Action is being taken now to address this. This will require changes to the rules of the IABA and the constitutional rights of IABA committees and work is already underway to propose changes to the rule book of the Association. Absent of making these changes, the programme will always be compromised and this will impact negatively on the ability of the programme to realise its full potential.

The National Championships play a key role in the identification of potential candidates for selection within the High Performance Programme. The proposed changes to the decision making structures around the programme include autonomy of selection for squads. In these circumstances, it is inappropriate and would represent a conflict of interest for any member of the High Performance coaching team to be in the corner of a boxer in the National Championships. Therefore, it is recommended that this practice is no longer allowed.

#### **Oversight of High Performance Programme**

The changes outlined above would create a fit for purpose structure for the High Performance Programme and enable the team working within the programme to operate with accountability and responsibility for the outcomes delivered. This will be further enhanced through the establishment of a High Performance Advisory Board (HPAB) with responsibility for providing support and challenge to the High Performance Programme.

The HPAB would replace the existing oversight committees within the Board and Council structures that currently play a role in High Performance matters. The HPAB would comprise of the following individuals:

- CEO;
- High Performance Director;
- One Nominated member of the IABA Board;
- Two nominated members of the IABA Council;
- Two independent High Performance experts.

The HPAB would meet on a quarterly basis and the primary function would be to review the strategy, plans, budget and progress of the High Performance Programme. In effect, the HPAB would act as an oversight body across each of these areas, a sounding board for, and provide advice and challenge to the High Performance Director and his/her team. For clarity, and to reinforce Recommendation 5 above, the HPAB would not have a role in vetoing or amending decisions made by the High Performance Programme.

To protect the integrity of this advisory group, all members of the HPAB should avoid any potential conflicts of interest with respect to their role. Examples of such conflicts might include service providers to the programme or personal coaches to boxers within the programme.

The independent High Performance experts should come from outside of the structures of the IABA and may or may not have a background in boxing. However, they should have a strong, recognised level of expertise in world class high performance structures and systems. They should be appointed on the basis of an open application and interview process.

#### **Back to Basics**

The original success of the High Performance Programme was undoubtedly rooted in a commitment to high standards of behaviour and culture across the programme. This was established early under the regime of Gary Keegan as HPD. This has gradually slipped in spite of, and in part as a result of, the continued success of the programme. The internal review carried out in 2014 after the 2013 World Championships in Almaty identified this as a key concern. The review highlighted “some slip in the culture of the programme since the London Olympics.” The absence of a dedicated Performance Director resulting in the attention of the then Head Coach, Billy Walsh, being divided across too many areas was also cited as a key contributory factor. This was accentuated following Billy Walsh’s departure and the workload imposed on Zauri Antia as Interim Head Coach. The 2014 review called out explicitly the need to “re-establish the foundations of excellence that had delivered success to date.”

The need for a sharper focus and accountability from coaches and support staff plus greater levels of ownership, responsibility and accountability of the senior boxers around their own preparation and performance were key recommendations arising from the review. A code of conduct for boxers was discussed and it was agreed that this would be formalised and implemented to reinforce this re-commitment to core behaviours. This was never implemented and there is no question that the slide in standards continued up to Rio 2016. Issues in relation to boxers' attendance at training, adherence to advice from coaches and support staff and a general lack of 'high performance' discipline were prevalent.

For example, one area of concern across the programme is the approach to weight management by some of the boxers and the coaching staff. The demands on individual athletes to monitor and control their weight is not trivial and requires significant sacrifices and discipline on behalf of the boxers. A slippage in the underlying culture of the programme accentuates this issue. A policy of maintaining weight within specified limits (e.g. 5% of target weight) on an ongoing basis is a feature of many similar programmes. In some cases, athletes were above this threshold for long periods of time. This was highlighted in the aftermath of the Paddy Barnes defeat at Rio and there is no question that the fact that Paddy never made his target weight from the point of his qualification some 16 months before Rio until the event itself reduced his chances of medalling. This problem was not exclusive to one boxer and led to significant issues in the case of other athletes within the programme. The support services staff and coaches within the programme expressed concerns in this regard, however it would appear that for various reasons the problems persisted. As a duty of care to athletes and to ensure that they are best prepared to compete and fulfil their potential this area should be tackled in a more pro-active manner and a culture of uncompromising discipline applied to weight management and control.

If the programme is to deliver sustained, long-term success these issues need to be addressed. The code of conduct should be implemented and enforced with rigour. Following Rio, the

make-up of the High Performance squad has changed with a number of boxers graduating to the professional ranks and a new group of athletes will form the basis of the programme going forward. This represents an opportunity to return to a 'back to basics' philosophy in terms of the underlying culture of the programme. The Interim Head Coach and the other coaches in the programme have identified this as a key short-term priority.

In the event that athletes breach the code of conduct, the High Performance Programme should be empowered to discipline the boxers as they see fit. As part of the code an explicit scale of offences (e.g. Level 1 to 3) should be developed with guidelines in terms of sanctions applicable based on the level of transgression. Sanctions may include the withholding of funding through the carding scheme. In the case of the most serious level of breach, a disciplinary hearing should be conducted by the High Performance Advisory Board and they would be responsible for setting the level of sanction. The rules of the IABA should be amended to facilitate this.

One symptom of the slippage in standards is the lack of comprehensive recording of key data relating to the boxers. For example, regular records should be kept of training attendance, weight tracking, adherence to training programmes and other essential elements of the programme. Such records have not been maintained through the London to Rio cycle. The programme should keep accurate, up-to-date records for every participant within the programme.

### **Support Services**

A range of support service staff are assigned to the programme, mainly on a part-time basis, offering services including physiotherapy, strength and conditioning, nutrition advice, sports psychology, performance analysis, medical expertise and lifestyle advice.

### **Physiotherapy**

The services provided by the physiotherapists on the programme are generally rated well by the coaches and athletes. However, there is an acceptance by service provider, athletes and coaches that the scale of support is inadequate for the needs of the programme. Ideally, a

physio should be appointed on a full time basis to the programme and available at all times when the athletes are in training camp and/or in competition. At present this is not the case. This should be rectified.

### **Nutrition**

The relationship between the Nutritionist and some boxers within the programme became increasingly strained over the London to Rio cycle. This came to a head when some of the athletes made public comments about the quality of advice available through the programme. It was recognised as part of the internal programme review in 2014 that one reason for this was that “some support staff deliver their expertise in areas that boxers may not find intrinsically enjoyable (e.g. physical conditioning, nutrition and weight management).” In our view, the coaches have a key role to play in addressing this and ensuring that there is a more positive working relationship between service providers and boxers in these areas. The coaches should take a more direct approach to the input of specialist advisors to ensure that they can deliver their service more effectively.

### **Strength and Conditioning**

The programme has access to a full time strength and conditioning expert and this is a key area of support. There are two issues that need to be addressed in this area. The first, is the need to have a more tailored programme to adapt to the individual needs of each boxer. Given the range of weight divisions and the natural difference in physiology of the boxers, it is important that the S&C programme for each athlete is specifically tailored to their individual requirements. In some cases, the athletes and coaches felt that the S&C programmes are too generic. The programme should explore the provision of additional physiological testing, such as the introduction of VO<sub>2</sub>, Hydration, and/or CK Tests, to help inform the specific requirements of each athlete.

Secondly, the S&C facilities at the National Stadium are not adequate for a world class high performance programme. The space within the gym for S&C is cramped and the equipment not state of the art. This can and should be addressed by moving the programme on a full time basis to the Sport Ireland Institute

facilities in Abbottstown (see 5.7 below).

### **Sports Psychology**

A sports psychologist has been working with the programme on a part-time basis for several years. Some athletes use this service more than others. By its nature it is a very personal support element of the programme. The sports psychologist was a member of the accredited party at Rio and at some of the qualification events in the lead-up to the Games. Some members of the team do not value this service as highly as others and question whether this is an essential element of the in-competition support team. Ultimately, this should be a decision that is made by the High Performance Director and based on the needs of the squad and the perceived value/priority of support services required competition by competition.

### **Performance Analysis**

Over the last 10 years the provision of performance analysis services has been provided through the Sport Ireland Institute. The programme has built up a significant database of analysis on each boxer within the unit and on opponents that is an important element in analysing and setting tactics in competition. It is a service that has been used in virtually every competition over that time. It was decided, due to restrictions on the number of accreditations available for the Games, not to bring a performance analyst as part of the support team for Rio. At previous Games (Beijing and London) the service could be facilitated remotely through access to TV broadcast footage. This service was not available in Rio. This service should be available either remotely or in person in competition mode.

In 2015, an exciting potential partnership with a data analytics company was explored which could have provided a ground-breaking level of performance analysis to the programme. Sport Ireland and Sport Ireland Institute explored this in detail, however ultimately the proposed partnership did not materialise. This is an example of an innovation project that may provide a competitive edge over other nations. If possible, this partnership project should be re-examined by Sport Ireland to assess the feasibility of delivering a world class performance analysis capability to the programme.

### Medical Expertise

The High Performance Programme identified the need for specific medical support in relation to the area of cuts after the wearing of head guards was dispensed with. A specialist expert in this discipline was recruited and assigned to the support staff for the World Championships, European Qualifiers and the Rio Games. This is a niche need, and can play a crucial role in keeping boxers in the ring. The provision of this service should be continued for all major championships.

### Lifestyle Advice

The programme has a responsibility to adopt a whole person approach to athletes within the programme. A lifestyle advisory service is available on a part-time basis to the programme and this role plays a key part in addressing some of the developmental needs of the boxers outside of the ring. It is essential that the IABA take seriously their role in investing in the personal development of their athletes. Various programmes should be offered on a proactive basis in areas such as education, adult literacy, mental health wellbeing and the boxers should be encouraged and facilitated to avail of these opportunities so that their involvement in the programme is a life enhancing experience.

### Maximising the impact of support services

The provision of support services is a central element of the High Performance Programme. The suite of services provided and the work of service providers should be managed directly by and co-ordinated through the High Performance Director to ensure that they are athlete focused and at all times are challenged to deliver to world class standards. A set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be agreed between the High Performance Director and the service providers and these should be tracked and monitored closely to ensure high quality of service, delivery of agreed targets and outcomes, and to assess value for money from these services.

Many of the service providers have been with the programme for several years. In the aftermath of the Rio Games, the time is right to re-calibrate the service provision to the programme and challenge each provider to assess their service and how they can improve

it heading in the Tokyo cycle. It will be the responsibility of the HPD to ensure that the relationships between the service providers, coaches and athletes are positive and healthy.

### High Performance Centre

Since inception the High Performance Unit has been based in the gym in the National Stadium. The facilities there are rudimentary and cramped. The establishment of the High Performance Centre at the Sport Ireland Institute in Abbottstown ensures that a world class training facility is now available to the boxing programme. All of the coaches and athletes within the programme are agreed that it is essential that the High Performance Unit moves lock, stock and barrel to this facility.

Two operational issues have been identified in relation to the re-location of the HP Unit to Abbottstown – catering and accommodation. The National Stadium has a full time caterer on site providing services to the HP Programme when they are in situ. There is no caterer on site at the Sports Institute. An arrangement will need to be put in place to ensure that high quality catering services are sourced for the HP Unit. Arrangements are already in place to address this by the IABA to address this. This should resolve the catering issue.

The accommodation issue is more complex. There is no provision currently for lodging or adequate rest and recovery facilities at Abbottstown. The HP Programme has a long-standing arrangement with the Louis Fitzgerald Hotel at a favourable rate. However, this is not an ideal environment for the boxers within the programme and the travel distance to this hotel from Abbottstown is a concern (the same issue applied to this arrangement when the HP Unit was based at the National Stadium). If possible, alternative accommodation should be sourced closer to Abbottstown, at similar rates to the existing arrangement in the short-term. A more permanent, long-term solution would be to house athletes on site at Abbottstown. There are plans for dormitory style units in subsequent phases of the development on site and this would solve the issue. The National Sports Campus Development Authority have identified a site on campus which could be developed for the exclusive use of the boxing programme and would be capable of housing

up to 20 people. This would represent an alternative long-term solution. The IABA have some concerns about this option and have not pursued it with the NSCDA. The IABA should continue to engage with the NSCDA and the Sport Ireland Institute to develop the optimum solution over the long-term for accommodation and rest & recovery facilities on site.

### **Role of Team Manager**

The role of Team Manager to the boxing team for international events and in particular Olympic Games is becoming an increasingly onerous one. The Rio Games highlighted this with the perfect storm of a failed drugs test, controversial judging decisions, disappointing performances within the squad, and two members of the squad being reprimanded for betting activity ensuring there were many issues to be managed over and above the normal issues encountered at the Games.

Traditionally, the IABA appointed the Team Manager from the volunteer base within the sport. The role, has for many years, rotated between the Provincial Council Chairs and indeed this is written in the IABA rulebook. The origin of this policy is in the spirit of recognising volunteers for their contribution to the sport. Whilst this is laudable, the practice is one that is outdated in the era of high performance.

As Rio proved, the role now demands the expertise of a professional. In future Olympiads (and other key international events) the role of Team Manager should be carried out by the High Performance Director. The High Performance Director will play a central role in the planning and preparation pre-Games and is best placed to deal with and manage the various issues that may arise during the event.

If, for any reason, the High Performance Director is unable to perform the role of Team Manager, then it should be appointed on the basis of capability through a selection process managed by the High Performance Director.

### **Succession planning**

Since its inception in 2003 the roll of honour of athletes that have passed through the High Performance Programme has grown. There is now a considerable pool of ex-boxers that have experience of the programme, its

culture, training methods and what it takes to be a high performance boxer. Few, if any, of these ex-boxers are actively involved in IABA coaching programmes. This seems like a missed opportunity.

Given the demands on the coaching resources across the programme and the need for additional resources to supplement the programme at key times through 'pool coaches', the option of integrating former High Performance Programme athletes into this pool should be explored. This will obviously be dependent on such individuals committing to developing their coaching qualifications and expertise, however the programme would benefit greatly from the infusion of 'younger blood' into the coaching ranks to supplement the more experienced club and provincial coaches included within the extended panel of coaches currently.

In addition, the High Performance Programme, should play a role in the education and development of provincial coaches through education masterclasses, inviting provincial coaches to attend and observe High Performance training days, and the mentoring of coaches as appropriate. It is in the long-term interests of the programme to increase the quality of coaching throughout the provincial and club environment. Strategically, it is essential that the High Performance Programme has a pipeline of coaching talent to draw on as part of a succession planning policy to ensure that the success of the programme is not reliant on one or two key individuals.

### **WSB Franchise**

The international landscape of amateur boxing has changed dramatically in the last number of years. The introduction of World Series of Boxing (WSB) and AIBA Pro Boxing (APB) has opened up new opportunities for boxers and qualification routes for the Olympic Games. A review of the medallists from Rio highlights the importance of WSB in particular. Across the 10 weight divisions in the male boxing events, 6 of the Gold, 5 of the Silver, and 12 of the Bronze medallists were WSB franchise fighters. That is a total of 23 out of 40 medals (or 57.5% of the medals). Furthermore, a review of the medals table by country shows that 8 of the top 11 in the table have a national WSB franchise.

This suggests that Irish boxing is at a disadvantage to other countries as long as it does not have a WSB franchise. Obviously, some members of the Irish squad competed for other franchises in WSB (and qualified for the games as a result). However, the majority of Irish boxers will not be involved in a WSB franchise.

There are many potential advantages to the establishment of an Irish based WSB franchise, including:

- Increased, high quality competitive opportunities for Irish boxers;
- More opportunities to qualify for future Olympic Games;
- A more concentrated programme ensuring that the coaches are not away from the core High Performance squad during the WSB events;
- The opportunity to create a strong team focus and identity around an Irish WSB franchise;
- High quality international competition in Ireland on a more frequent basis to capture the imagination and grow the Irish boxing fan base;
- A platform to build the public profile of an extended group of boxers within the High Performance Programme;
- An opportunity to develop a revitalised brand around the High Performance Programme and attract commercial sponsorship.

If Ireland is serious about the ambition to become the leading boxing nation at future Olympic Games, then it cannot ignore the emergence of WSB. Obviously, the cost of a WSB franchise is a significant obstacle to be overcome. However, a feasibility study should be carried out to determine if an Irish franchise could be established. This will require innovative thinking and a very different approach.

We would recommend the exploration of a potential partnership model involving the IABA, Sport Ireland, private investment and a major media organisation. If approached in the right way it could be a new dawn and a major game changer for the High Performance Programme and the IABA.

### **Commercial Strategy**

The High Performance Programme is reliant almost exclusively on state funding through Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland. One of the major failings of the IABA in this regard, has been the inability to raise self-generated commercial income on the back of the success of the programme. Whilst it is accepted that the sponsorship and commercial market is difficult, the bottom line is that boxing has been Ireland's most successful Olympic sport by some distance and this should have been leveraged to raise additional revenues.

The outcome of Rio and the recent controversies associated with the IABA and the High Performance Programme make this a much more difficult sell now. However, the organisation should focus on steps they can take to build confidence in the brand and create a platform for building positive relationships with potential commercial partners.

## BOXING RECOMMENDATIONS

This is a summary of the recommendations outlined within the review:

1. Set a target for Tokyo 2020 to be within the Top 3 countries in terms of numbers of boxers qualified and set an ambition to qualify a boxer in every available weight category.
2. Re-commit to the goal of 5th (in London) to 1st in the World in the future and use this to continually challenge every aspect of the High Performance programme to ensure World Class standards apply throughout.
3. Appoint an experienced and qualified High Performance Director to lead the programme, separate to the role of Head Coach.
4. Establish a revised organisation structure for the core High Performance Programme Team. The core team should consist of:
  - Performance Director (with overall responsibility for the vision, strategy, plan and operations of the programme);
  - Head Coach (with overall responsibility for the lead in terms of technical and tactical coaching across the programme);
  - High Performance Coaches (working with Senior & Junior Men's and Women's squads)
  - High Performance Administration Manager (supporting the team on all operational matters across the programme);
  - The core High Performance team will be supplemented with Pool Coaches based on the demand of the programme at any point in time.

The Performance Director will have direct line management responsibility for all staff within the programme including the Head Coach, High Performance Coaches, High Performance Administration manager and Pool Coaches. The Performance Director will report directly to the CEO.
5. The High Performance Programme, under the leadership of an experienced and qualified High Performance Director, should have full autonomy for all elements of the programme including management of the Board approved budget and finances assigned to the programme, selection of squads and athletes participating in the programme and disciplinary issues of participants within the programme.
6. No member of the High Performance Coaching Team should act in the corner of a boxer in the National Championships.
7. Establish a High Performance Advisory Board (HPAB) to act as an oversight body, a sounding board for and to provide advice and challenge to the High Performance Programme. For further detail on the make-up and structure see Section 4.4 above.
8. The High Performance Programme should adopt a stricter monitoring and control of weight management across the athletes within the programme. Boxers should be managed in a controlled way to maintain an agreed target weight limit (e.g. within 5% of their fighting weight) on an ongoing basis.
9. Formalise the boxer code of conduct and commit to a 'back to basics' philosophy to re-establish a strong high performance culture and set of behaviours across the programme.

10. The High Performance Programme should develop a scale of disciplinary offences based on the code of conduct and be empowered to discipline boxers for breaches as appropriate. In the case of the most serious level of breach the High Performance Advisory Board will conduct a disciplinary hearing and determine the appropriate sanction.
11. Ensure accurate and up-to-date records of key data relating to each boxer in the programme is maintained within the programme.
12. Appoint a full-time physio to the programme and ensure this service is available at all times when the High Performance squad are in training camp or in competition to guarantee immediate access to and increased quality of service to the athletes.
13. Coaches should take a more hands on approach in directing the input of service providers to ensure that they can deliver their service more effectively.
14. Tailor S&C programmes to the individual needs of each athlete within the programme and expand the range of physiological tests conducted.
15. The High Performance Director should have ultimate responsibility for deciding on the make-up of the support service providers that travel with the team for each competition based on the perceived value/priority of the team and the available budget within the programme for such services.
16. Ensure that performance analysis services are available to coaches in competition, either directly or remotely.
17. Explore the possibility of establishing an innovative partnership with a data analytics company to deliver a world-leading performance analysis capability to the High Performance Programme.
18. Continue the practice of including a niche medical expert in managing cuts within the support team for all major championships.
19. Offer, on a proactive basis, a range of development programmes to athletes to maximise their personal development throughout their participation within the High Performance Unit.
20. The High Performance Director should manage directly and co-ordinate the provision of services by all support providers to the programme. An agreed set of KPIs should be established and monitored closely to ensure quality of service, delivery of agreed outcomes and value for money. Each provider should be challenged to assess their service and how it can be improved heading into the Tokyo cycle.
21. Relocate the High Performance Unit in full to the High Performance Centre at the Sport Ireland Institute in Abbottstown.
22. Ensure that adequate catering arrangements are put in place at Abbottstown to service the requirements of the HP Unit.
23. Examine alternative options for accommodation closer to Abbottstown in the short-term at a similar cost to the existing arrangement with the IABA hotel provider.

24. Explore the optimum long-term solution to provide on-site accommodation and rest & recovery facilities on site at Abbottstown.
25. The role of Team Manager at Olympic Games and other key international events should be assigned to the High Performance Director. In the event the HPD is unable to perform the role of Team Manager for an event, then the role should be appointed by the HPD.
26. Identify past graduates of the High Performance Programme as potential new coaches and focus on their development to attract 'new blood' into the coaching ranks across the HP and provincial programmes.
27. The High Performance Programme should play a role in the development of provincial coaches through education masterclasses, invitations to attend training days/camps and mentoring of coaches.
28. Carry out a feasibility study with a consortium of partners to assess the viability of establishing an Irish based WSB Franchise.
29. Develop a strategy to build confidence in the IABA and High Performance brand and build positive relationships with potential commercial partners.
30. The IABA, led by the CEO, should develop a detailed implementation roadmap outlining the critical path and timetable for change as a result of the Rio Review.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Many of those interviewed as part of this review expressed concerns about the ability of the IABA to implement the changes required to re-invigorate the High Performance Programme. Indeed, several of the recommendations have been highlighted previously in reviews carried out after previous Olympiads and in internal reviews conducted out by the programme itself. These concerns are well founded, as previous history suggests that organisational change is slow and hard to implement. However, the imperative for reform and decisive action should create an urgency to act. If the lessons learnt in the cycle from London to Rio are ignored the likelihood is that the High Performance Programme will continue to slide and under-achieve.

However, the opportunity exists to use Rio as the fundamental wake-up call required to re-invigorate the programme and establish it once more as the most successful Irish sporting programme and on a par with the best boxing programmes in the world. The talent pool of athletes and coaches is there. The track record of Irish boxers in the Junior ranks shows that clubs across all provinces are capable of producing boxers with the potential to succeed internationally.

Senior personnel within the IABA including the CEO, Chairman and President are all in agreement that fundamental change is required. The coaches within the High Performance Programme want these changes to be implemented to enable them deliver the ambitions they have for their athletes. The key external stakeholders are anxious to see a real commitment to the change process they see as necessary to instil confidence in their investment in the programme. This is a good starting point. Change is difficult and requires strong leadership and a unified determination from all involved to implement and in some cases a leap of faith by people to relinquish power and authority to those tasked with delivery.

The IABA should develop a detailed implementation roadmap outlining the critical path and timetable for change as a result of this review. This should be developed and agreed with the Board by the end of December 2016. Some of the changes outlined within this review have resource implications. As part of the development of the implementation roadmap it will be key to review the budget for High Performance and agree how this will be allocated, if possible, without compromising the ambition of the programme.

All parties involved must commit fully to working together to make this happen. It will be a challenging journey. However, as every Olympian will tell you, nothing comes easy and the blood sweat and tears will all be worth it if the Irish Boxing Programme can return to the success it has enjoyed in the past.

## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

The following were interviewed on a one-to-one basis as part of this review:

### Boxers

Paddy Barnes  
 Brendan Irvine  
 Michael Conlan  
 Dean Walsh  
 Steven Donnelly  
 Darren O’Neill  
 Ceire Smith  
 Christina Desmond

### Boxers invited but not interviewed

David Oliver Joyce  
 Joe Ward  
 Dean Gardiner  
 Michaela Walsh  
 Katie Taylor

### Coaches

Zauri Antia  
 Eddie Bolger  
 John Conlan  
 Dmitry Dmitruk  
 Billy McClean

### IABA Staff and Officers

Fergal Carruth - CEO  
 Rachel Mulligan -High Performance Operations  
 John Nangle - Financial Officer  
 Joe Christle - Chairman  
 Pat Ryan – President  
 Joe Hennigan – Team Manager

### Support Service Providers

John Cleary – S&C Coach  
 Sharon Madigan – Nutritionist  
 Alan Swanton – Analyst  
 Julianne Ryan – Physio  
 Gerry Hussey – Sport Psychologist  
 David McHugh – Personal Development & Lifeskills  
 Daragh Sheridan – PEP Podium Programme  
 Jim Clover – Team Doctor

### Others

Paul McDermott – Director, High Performance, Sport Ireland  
 Billy Walsh – Former Head Coach  
 Emira O’Neill – Former HP Operations Officer  
 Kenneth Egan – Former Olympic Boxer  
 Steve Martin – CEO Olympic Council of Ireland  
 Shaun Ogle – Director of Performance, Sport Northern Ireland  
 Richard Archibald – Performance Co-ordinator Sports Institute NI



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND

MURPHY

Rio 2016  


IRI

Rio 2016



# Irish Sailing Association

Facilitator: Prof Craig Mahoney

## Annalise Murphy became the 1st Irish female to win an Olympic medal in Sailing

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report should be read in conjunction with the summary of survey findings completed for Sport Ireland by a range of athletes and personnel linked with the Irish Sailing Association and involved with preparations for the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

The Irish Sailing Association (ISA) has developed and delivered an incredible programme from participation to performance, linked not only to the four-year Olympic cycle, but also to the development of elite performance and relevant results at age group, intermediate events and across the four-year period leading up to the Rio Games.

The ISA plan to deliver excellence at Rio 2016, resulted in a Silver medal performance in the Women's Laser Radial class following a 4th place finish in that class at London 2012, by the same athlete.

Of the six athletes in four classes (Women's Laser Radial, Men's Laser, Women's 49er FX, Men's 49er) who represented Ireland at Rio, two classes performed at or near expectations including one winning a silver medal. The other two classes produced credible results that were part of a development plan that was designed to enter the class for the first time at an Olympics or to enable a young new athlete to gain Olympic experience in preparation for a longer term campaign.

Given it has been 36 years since Ireland last won an Olympic medal this is an extremely exciting achievement and provides evidence of the success of the longer term strategy that ISA has been following for many years now.

Sailing has a very professional programme and structure in place. The Performance Director and the ISA CEO have a close working relationship and along with the Chair of the Olympic Steering Group, form a compelling team.

## METHODOLOGY

Sport Ireland survey results were obtained from four of six athletes, 10 of 17 coaches involved in the Olympic cycle, nine of 10 CEO/Board/OSG members and the Performance Director. These results provided a rich source of evidence for aspects of the Olympic programme that had worked well, areas of concern, a summary of the Games experience and clarity to future considerations for the next Olympic cycle.

With a desire to gain more insight into the ISA programme a series of 1:1 meetings were arranged to meet with athletes and staff linked to the Olympic programme. Meetings took place with the following;

- Finn Lynch, Laser
- Harry Hermon, CEO for Irish Sailing
- James O'Callaghan, Performance Director
- Mark McCabe, physio plus strength and conditioning lead
- Ryan Seaton, 49er
- Matt McGovern, 49er
- Colm Barrington, Chair of the Olympic Steering Group (OSG)
- Annalise Murphy, Laser Radial sailor
- Saskia Tidey, 49er FX
- Stephen McIvor, sport psychologist (49er FX and Laser)
- Rory Fitzpatrick, Academy Manager and coach to Annalise Murphy

## FINDINGS

### Games Performance

The six athletes agreed their games performance was as expected. Whilst some level of disappointment exists for all classes, the evidence is clear that each of these classes produced credible and expected results based on performance history from the prior period.

By self-report it appears nothing could have been done to improve the Games performances, though undoubtedly each class can identify races in Rio during which they made mistakes and other in-event situations where they could have taken different decisions which may have led to alternative outcomes. I am satisfied, from the survey data and the 1:1

interviews that this has been a very successful Games for sailing.

The Performance Director, who has played an intimate and extremely valuable role throughout this preparation period, has enjoyed strong support from the CEO and the Board overseeing the Olympic preparation.

### Games Experience

The athletes, coaches and support staff stayed in accommodation separate to the Games village. This is normal and typical for sailing in Olympic Games due to the estranged nature of the regatta venues typically used. The prospect of a 1.5-2.0 hour bus journey from the village to the race venue each way, each day, would have been debilitating to the athletes and they were right to opt for accommodation arrangements close to the regatta site and dingy park.

The team could have benefited from additional accreditations given the complexity of sailing which is supported by coaches, science personnel, medical staff and technical teams. In future games it would be important for the OCI to give greater support on accreditations for a sailing team. Survey responses suggest there is a desire to have more psychology support at Games along with expert food preparation.

Despite the lack of accreditations, the athletes were able to gain access to experts in tidal patterns, rules, coaching, psychology, physio and medical needs. However, this was often off the dingy park which added to the complexity of getting support as and when needed.

There were learning points from the games, which included taking care to get the right mix of team members in the respective accommodations available. Ensuring that nutritional support, including cooking arrangements, are appropriately developed to allow athletes to re-load effectively throughout the regatta.

Consideration of how best to use downtime, including rest days, could probably be improved for the future, but this is also dependent upon venue, national culture, safety considerations and accessibility.

### **Strategic Reflections**

To allow athletes to prepare effectively and deliver their best performance, their needs must be prioritised. It seems unfortunate that communications between the ISA and the OCI on logistics was not as transparent as possible. The booking of travel arrangements by the OCI, which were tedious, convoluted and failed to take account of pre-performance needs, was highly inappropriate. This also included return travel arrangements which involved a ridiculously long bus journey to a neighbouring airport, seemingly to save costs.

In a sport like sailing, which has massive logistical requirements for some classes, such as the transport and collection of boats, sails, technical gear and equipment, this cannot be arranged without the input of the ISA who are hugely experienced in ensuring such athlete needs are optimised.

The performance programme has a very comprehensive support system in place. All athletes had access to coaching, technical support, sport science, medicine, physiotherapy, logistics knowledge and the personal support of a Performance Director who remains fully committed to achieving results at all levels and all pathways leading to an Olympic effort.

Other countries with larger fleet competition will often preselect teams earlier than Ireland. Late selection processes, once a class has been qualified, is useful in enabling some athletes to represent the country who might not earlier have been ready to secure selection (cite Laser men for Rio) but this could sometimes result in athletes focussing too much on winning selection rather preparing for the Olympic regatta. There is no ideal system, this is merely an observation.

### **NGB Governance of High Performance**

This is a sport with highly developed oversight to a High Performance programme. As part of the review process I met with the Chair of the OSG and confirmed the manner in which this expert group was close to the performance programme, monitored the spending plans, encouraged pursuit of sponsorship and philanthropic giving linked to the Olympic

cycle and profiled the athletes to the sailing community and beyond.

During the last four-year period some challenges between the OSG and the Board created complexities that are now being resolved. Whilst this was an internal matter it was challenging to the Performance Director and CEO and distracting from their respective core business activities.

The governance structures within the sport have been developed over successive Olympic cycles and I am satisfied the performance structures are both effective and fit for purpose. The responsibilities given to the Performance Director to plan and prepare athletes for competition is carefully monitored by the OSG but the boundaries between governance and leadership have been clearly demarcated and are understood.

## SAILING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Despite success in winning a medal for sailing, the programme can benefit from changes and developments over the coming four years. The reliance on Sport Ireland funding to underwrite the performance programme is both a strength and a weakness. Work is underway to **diversify income to support the performance programme**. In sports like sailing with significant capital needs, allocating funding on an annual basis is unhelpful. The sport and the athletes would be far more able to launch and deliver credible and performance based campaigns if funding was known over a longer period. All athletes accept the card funded system and are comfortable that funding should follow results, but the dips in continuity have caused some challenges for class campaigns over this period.
2. Funding available over the period has been generous, if considered against other sports of with a similar participation base. However, sailing has a real chance to deliver Olympic medals and success in recent Olympiads demonstrates the plan in place is producing positive results. **Care must be taken by the NGB to remain within their budget allocation, or to consider how difficult decisions might be made to invest in classes with realistic chances of medalling or achieving particular levels of success e.g. top 10 finishes in major events and Olympic competition**. For future cycles however, consideration must be given as to how the ISA can secure available resources to supplement the funding provided through Sport Ireland. Direct NGB investment and OCI support were two areas where the Performance Director was frustrated with the support given.
3. Communication channels in all sports are crucial but can be challenging. Because of the pressures of campaigning, linked with income generating activities, travel and competition, athletes are sometimes not able to communicate freely or easily with the support staff or ISA personnel associated with the performance Programme. This was evident between physio staff and athletes, though **an internet based monitoring and development system is being trialled which if instigated properly will overcome some challenges** evident as a result of athlete's travel needs.
4. The lack of contact between OCI and the NGB is not in itself a problem, but recent circumstances and publicity linked with OCI has not been helpful to Irish sport. All respondents felt over the cycle OCI contact was less than ideal, some having no contact at all. Yet at the point when the Rio pre-performance needs are most critical, the OCI took responsibility for logistics and equipment transfer without any expertise or appropriate interaction with the governing body. Whilst the athletes in this sport were able to reconcile the challenges created by OCI, this is just totally inappropriate. The majority of coaching and support staff felt that the elements of the programme were either "effective" or "very effective". The one exception was the "Overall preparation of the OCI's support" which the majority of responders rated as "ineffective" or "very ineffective".
5. The sport would benefit from **more class competition within Ireland**. This is not easily managed for newer or more expensive classes, but to have only one boat in a class competing from Ireland will result in the athletes having to live away and not be very visible within the country.

7. Post Games preparation was noted as an area of low satisfaction by all groups responding to the survey. However, when questioned this was not something that could be explained easily. It is unclear what expectations were in place, but note was mentioned of unacceptable return air travel arrangements, and errors made in flights which for one class had them booked to leave before their regatta had finished. It will be important for future Olympiads for travel arrangements to be overseen by the NGB, not the OCI.
8. Finally, whilst it may seem minor, many respondents to the survey and all interviewed personnel felt the absence of Team Ireland team building or a proper send off when leaving Dublin was a significant deficit in giving a sense of achievement to represent their country and perform at an Olympiad.





SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
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# Paralympics Ireland

Facilitators: Maeve Buckley and Tricia Heberle

# 11

medals won by Team Ireland at the 2016 Paralympic Games across 3 sports

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Paralympics Ireland (PI) supported Irish athletes to a successful 28th place in the Rio 2016 medal table. A total of eleven medals were achieved which exceeded the performance target set. The medals were delivered in athletics, swimming, and cycling, the top three sports receiving significant investment from PI. Both athletics and swimming are governed by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), and so, are managed by the PI staff. In the case of cycling, it is governed by the National Governing Body, Cycling Ireland (CI). An emerging group of young talented athletes who performed well in Rio, are positioned positively for the next cycle. However, there is a need to establish a Talent ID model and performance pathway for Irish Paralympic athletes for future cycles.

Success in Rio was delivered through sound high performance planning, and overall solid strategic planning, across PI sports and NGB supported programmes and athletes. The Chef De Mission carried out his role at the Rio Paralympic games to a high standard, despite the pressures of being a volunteer. Ideally this role should be undertaken on a paid contract basis for the next cycle. It was recognized that

changes to the HP leadership structure and associated staff positions across the four year Rio cycle had a destabilizing effect. In addition, the system is highly dependent on volunteers with limited resources stretched across the system. Among these challenges, there is a polarized view across NGBs, coaches, and athlete as to the value of the traditional PI multi-sports camps held throughout the cycle.

Paralympics Ireland as a governing body is perceived well externally with key stakeholders viewing the organization positively, and the media having a good impression of the organization, athletes and their achievements. This view has been supported by the PI commercial and communication teams, who have built key strategic commercial and media relationships to help promote a positive impression among the general public. PI is well governed, led and managed, with a high functioning Board and a strong CEO and executive team. The challenge leading into Tokyo will be to supplement High Performance (HP) knowledge at Board level, and support the executive team through more robust human resource practices, as well as clear delineation of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

It remains difficult to maintain interest in Paralympic sport outside of Games years, whilst the constant requirement to generate funds commercially also weighs heavily on the organisation. Relationships with Sport Ireland, Sports Institute Northern Ireland (SINI) and the Sport Ireland Institute are strong. However, there is a need to recalibrate strategically and tactically to best support increased numbers of athletes. Specifically, with regards to athlete support services, there is a greater need for medical and physiotherapy support (both at the Games and across the cycle), and a greater emphasis needs to be placed on nutrition and recovery.

Overall, Paralympics Ireland is a solid governing body, with an impressive track record, operating with limited and stretched resources and a heavy workload. There is an unanswered strategic question as to whether the remit of Paralympics Ireland is solely that of supporting elite sports people to Paralympic Games success, or is also one of participation, and the broader remit of supporting Paralympic sport. If it can confront and clarify that question internally, it should be reasonably well positioned to face the next quadrennial and the external challenges it faces along that way.

## KEY FINDINGS

### PART 1 – Facilitator Tricia Heberle

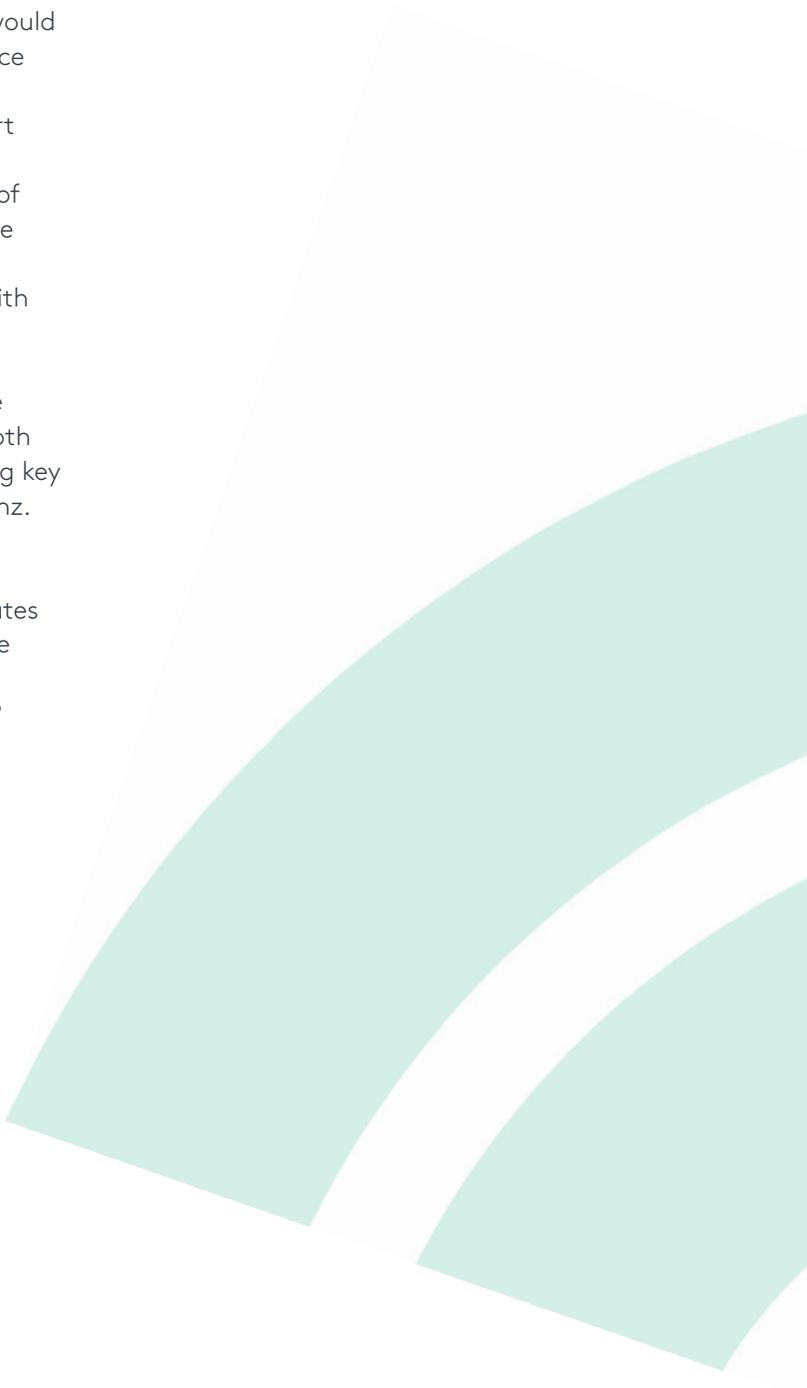
1. While the overall metrics indicate that Rio was not as successful a Games as London 2012, Paralympic Ireland achieved its primary Rio performance targets.
2. There is currently a mixed approach to setting clearly defined performance targets for the Games, with both Performance and Participation outcomes targeted at Rio 2016.
3. Sports programmes with significant investment from PI, sustained medal success across the quadrennial, not only at the Games in Rio.
4. There is an emerging group of young talented athletes who performed well in Rio and are positioned positively for the next cycle.
5. As is already recognized by PI, there is inequity in how sports and athletes are supported both financially and in service provision at the Paralympic Games and during the 4 years leading into a Games.
6. There is a polarized view across NGB's, team leaders, coaches and athletes as to the value of the PI multi-sport camps that are conducted across the quadrennial cycle.
7. Sport science providers and coaches believe that a greater emphasis is required on educating and supporting athletes in the areas of nutrition and recovery techniques.
8. Additional medical and physiotherapy support is needed both at the Games and across the cycle.
9. Recovery facilities and equipment for Tokyo needs to be improved on what was available in Rio.
10. There is evidence of detailed planning for Rio across PI programme sports, some NGB supported programmes, and for targeted athletes. However, this area needs to be more systemic with a common framework and clearly defined targets for each sport, athletes, and support staff (i.e. technical coach, S&C coach).
11. There are a range of commonplace high performance frameworks that are not currently being utilized by PI. A 'check and challenge' audit of their high performance capacity and capability would assist in identifying the gaps in this area.
12. Changes to the HP leadership staff structure and associated staff across the four year Rio cycle may well have had a destabilizing effect that impacted on operations and the overall performance of Team Ireland.
13. Given the recent changes in personnel within PI, it is imperative to have clarity across all HP roles and responsibilities.
14. The HPD should continue to develop a HP mindset and culture across all programmes in order to replicate success in the future.

15. The CDM, a position with voluntary status, carried out his role at the Rio Paralympic Games to a very high standard.
16. HP Coach Education and Development needs to be prioritized with a greater emphasis on coaches having access to education on modern sport science practices and access to a programme akin to the Sport Ireland Institute PEP programme.
17. Performance analysis support and capacity needs to be increased leading into qualification for Tokyo. At a minimum two personnel are required in this area.
18. While there is a recognition that the Sport Ireland Institute is under-resourced and at full capacity, there is a need for the Sport Ireland Institute and PI to continue to promote their charter, role and responsibilities to NGBs, coaches and athletes to ensure that expectations of support are understood and managed effectively.
19. The PI/Sport Ireland Institute relationship is effective and impacts positively on athletes and coaches.
20. Solutions and a flexible model needs to be identified to service athletes based outside of Dublin and who cannot regularly access Sport Ireland Institute providers. This may lead to PI exploring the potential of establishing more formalized PI Sport science hubs.
21. The three sports of athletics, cycling, and swimming have been supported very well by the Sport Ireland Institute with athletes achieving measurable improvement in performance.
22. The 'PI Sport Science' team as a concept and operationally works well and has been positive for staff and athletes. However, all staff should have clearly defined roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and performance targets.
23. The PI budget for high performance remains inadequate for providing the best possible support to NGBs, athletes, and coaches. This aligns to an overall underinvestment by Government in high performance sport operations and outcomes.
24. A number of NGBs need to invest more in their Para HP programmes and ensure that the programmes are more visible and have higher priority.
25. The current athlete carding scheme may need to be looked at to ensure that the overall investment has a performance impact for individuals and their sport.
26. There is a perception amongst smaller sports that PI needs to assess their core business and either support all sports equally, or allow smaller NGBs, with PI support, to assume full responsibility for Para programmes and athletes.
27. The CI Paralympic programme was the most successful Irish performance programme in Rio 2016, and there is evidence of systemic delivery, but it is highly reliant on volunteers.
28. The system is highly dependent on volunteers across multiple sports and the focus of NGBs on their 'para' sport is questionable, given their own limited resources.

## **PART 2 - Maeve Buckley**

29. Paralympics Ireland is well governed, with a strong Board and CEO.
30. The Chef de Mission role should be undertaken on a paid contract basis for the next cycle.
31. There is a good executive management team in place, and that team dynamic can be further developed through maintaining consistent weekly management team meetings throughout the year, and the implementation of robust HR practices.
32. There is a question that lies at the heart of all activities undertaken by Paralympics Ireland; about whether the organization is truly geared towards elite sport, or participation, and the broader remit of supporting Paralympic sport at any level.
33. Paralympics Ireland has a strong level of strategic planning, and delivering against strategic plans.
34. A high priority area for development is the need to establish a Talent ID model and performance pathway for Irish Paralympic athletes.

35. Paralympics Ireland as an organization is perceived well externally. Key stakeholders (Funding partners, service providers, NGBs, media) view the organisation positively, and PI are perceived as being easy to work with, across all levels of the organization.
36. The relationship with the Sport Ireland Institute has been fruitful – it should now be recalibrated to best serve the needs of PI athletes through the coming cycle.
37. Greater alignment of the Sport Ireland Institute and SINI at a strategic level would likely provide for more integrated service provision across the island.
38. There are good relations between Sport Ireland and Paralympics Ireland.
39. The media have a positive impression of Paralympics Ireland and relay a positive impression of the athletes and their achievements to the general public, with RTE now a key media partner.
40. It is a challenge at both a commercial and communications level to generate interest outside of Games year, and both departments have done well in building key strategic relationships in RTE and Allianz.
41. The constant requirement of PI to generate funds externally, due to the underinvestment by Government, creates a constant commercial pressure on the organization. Securing alternative and sustainable revenue to support the HP budget is an ongoing challenge.



## PARALYMPICS RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations pertain to areas of improvement and enhancement for the Performance Programme leading into Tokyo 2020:

1. The role and duties of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the High Performance Director (HPD), and how they interface at an operational level, needs to balance both accountability and the need for the HPD to have agreed autonomy in matters pertaining to high performance.
2. Performance management of sport department staff, a responsibility of the HPD, needs to ensure that there are high levels of professionalism and accountability at all times. As an operational model this must relate to the overall organisational culture of performance management and professional development.
3. There must be clearly defined performance targets established for the Tokyo cycle with an awareness that participation, while a part of performance, may not be the ultimate aim or the outcome required to justify high performance investment and continued relevance of Para competition.
4. A High Performance Advisory Group, with approved terms of reference should be established by Paralympic Ireland to provide a strategic 'check and challenge' group to support both the CEO and the HPD. This group should contain up to five members, be chaired by the HPD, and include independent high performance expertise.
5. A high performance audit should be carried out to review a range of embedded practices and events (e.g. multi-sport training camps). This should be initiated as a matter of priority as part of the planning process for Tokyo 2020 through the facilitation of the above advisory group and with stakeholder engagement.
6. Subject to the above, and if deemed appropriate, an inter-related and aligned 'whole of system' set of high performance tools should be developed to ensure an aligned direction and collective purpose for PI and NGBs. This will provide clarity and transparency in planning, reporting, decision-making, and allocation of funding and support.
7. A Coaching Tokyo 2020 programme, akin to the PEP programme should be developed or facilitated through PI and/or with support or a targeted partnership with the Sport Ireland Institute. This will provide a long term professional development experience for coaches who will potentially go to Tokyo and/or be supporting athletes aspiring to this, across the cycle.
8. Performance analysis support for coaches and athletes needs to be significantly increased, especially for the qualification phase of the Tokyo cycle, with the opportunity to establish more University partnerships seen as a priority for this area.
9. Increased investment into human resource is urgently required into the Sport Ireland Institute who are currently under-resourced and operating to maximum capacity. This would allow for increased and more flexible servicing of para and able bodied athletes in the key sport science and medicine, i.e. physiotherapy, strength and conditioning, and psychology.
10. All current and/or new sport science and medicine service providers working with para athletes should have clearly defined role descriptions and accountabilities, including individual key performance indicators and how their work contributes to the achievement of athlete performance targets.

11. Medical and physiotherapy services need greater investment and prioritization leading into Tokyo with the appointment of at least two medical Doctors early in the cycle, the identification of a network of physiotherapists and multiple Athlete Service Hubs to support athletes based outside of Dublin in a more coordinated way.
12. A greater emphasis is needed to be placed on nutrition and recovery, with an education programme developed that covers nutrition for optimum performance, preparation, recovery, re-fueling and rehydration.
13. Recovery facilities with a range of therapies needs to be further improved on for Tokyo, with a fully equipped PI recovery suite available to athletes.
14. Paralympic Ireland and NGBs need to continue to lobby Government and Sport Ireland as to the limitations of the existing high performance budget for support and the need to ensure that existing investment and funding schemes deliver performance outcomes.

**The following recommendations pertain to areas of improvement for the Organisation leading into Tokyo 2020:**

15. The mission of Paralympics Ireland is 'Leading elite athletes with a disability to Paralympic Games' and as per the Shared Vision for the Disability Sports Sector in 2025, Paralympics Ireland does not have a role at participation level. Paralympics Ireland must address and agree internally, as a priority, its understanding of elite vs participation, and clearly define what elite means to the organisation. Measurements of success for the next strategic plan (from 2017) and in the Tokyo 2020 pathway plan must underpin and support the mission of the organisation. Those plans must underline and define what 'elite' means to the organisation, and show clear milestones it will achieve along the way of its strategic goals.
16. To support the delivery of the goal of true organisational excellence, Paralympics Ireland should pay for administrative support in the Human Resource area. Through the use of paid external HR support, (e.g. 20 hours a month), it can provide extra man hours to address the areas of organisational growth, management function and planning, team building, reporting structures, career development, debriefs and reviews, inductions and succession planning. The end result of this work should be a solid HR infrastructure and process, led internally and supported externally, with a robust staff support system, and an engaged proactive team.
17. Paralympics Ireland should proceed with weekly management meetings, at a set-time each week. The agenda and duration of this meeting should be clear, and the overall goal being one of operating as a team, with clear communications, and with executive management decisions resting with this team and strategic leadership decisions with the Board. The executive management team should continue to be invited on a regular basis (at a minimum twice per annum) to report directly to the Board.
18. The role of Chef de Mission should become a paid contract role, hired for 18 to 24 months to cover the Games period (and ideally with a handover from the previous Chef de Mission). The existing job description should be reviewed and rewritten to cover the key 6-8 objectives that the Chef de Mission is responsible for. The Chef de Mission should report to the Board on a regular basis closer to the Games time. With a contracted Chef de Mission in place and fully responsible for the logistics and delivery of the games, the HPD could look after the three performance sports of Athletics, Cycling, Swimming, and the Operations Manager look after the remaining sports.

19. Paralympics Ireland should seek to put significant additional resource over the next cycle behind its strategic goal to 'Establish a talent identification model and performance pathway for Irish Paralympic athletes'. Delivering a centralized world class talent identification and talent transfer programme, as identified in previous strategic planning processes, is likely to be central to building success over future cycles, from 2020 and beyond.

20. When next recruiting new Board Members, Paralympics Ireland should seek to maintain high performance expertise at Board level. High Performance should become a high priority standing item on the monthly Board meeting agenda. There should be frequent direct reporting at Board level from the HPD.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION & FINDINGS

### PART 1 – Per Facilitator Tricia Heberle

#### Athlete Performance and Delivery of High Performance Targets and Goals

**Objective: To review and assess the performances and results of Irish athletes at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.**

Paralympics Ireland, Sport Ireland and the NGB's supported the qualification of 48 Irish athletes across 10 sports for the Rio 2016 Games. Overall, Team Ireland ranked 28 on the medal table, with athletes delivering 11 medals and 22 top 8 performances at the Games. The performances at Rio exceeded the medal target of 8 set by Paralympics Ireland with Sport Ireland and included numerous personal bests.

**Table 1: Rio Olympic Games Performance Targets**

| 2016 RIO TARGETS  | ACHIEVE-MENTS          |
|---|------------------------|
| Sustain Ireland's medal table position in the Top 30                            | 28                     |
| Medals in more than four sports   | 11 Medals/<br>3 sports |
| Team size in excess of 50 athletes  | 48                     |
| Increase in the number of sports represented on the Irish team to more than 10. | 10                     |

A full list of Team Ireland Paralympic Games results can be found at Appendix 4.

The general opinion across internal and external stakeholders is that the latter two targets are technically not 'performance', but 'participation goals'. While these remain important for PI at an organizational level, in pure high performance terms it is the first two targets that have the most relevance to this part of the review. Being clear about what high performance needs to deliver and is accountable for is paramount to sustained success and how PI works with NGBs. Feedback would suggest that the mixed agenda at the moment creates confusion from Board level right down to the athletes that compete. Perceivably it could also compromise the high performance agenda and investment from Sport Ireland.

In comparison to London 2012 there was a decrease in the number of medals won. However, this was primarily due to international factors such as changes to the event programme, classification and a nationality transfer as well as a number of athlete retirements. It should also be recognized that Rio as a location for the Games presented considerably more challenges for the team than in London 2012, where it was more like a 'home games'.

**Table 2: Team Ireland Paralympic Results 2004 - 2016**

| GAMES                 | MEDAL TABLE | MEDAL | TOP 8 |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| 2016 – Rio De Janiero | 28          | 11    | 22    |
| 2012 – London         | 19          | 16    | 27    |
| 2008 – Beijing        | 36          | 5     | 18    |
| 2004 - Athens         | 61          | 4     | 2     |

Team Ireland athletes did their country proud in Rio, exceeding the medal target and achieving the desired medal table ranking. They were regarded by the Chef de Mission (CDM) and staff as a ‘tight knit’ group. While there were no doubt a range of different personal and performance experiences in Rio, feedback from the athlete group recognized that everyone was striving for the same things; To represent their country with honour and pride, to support each other and to compete to their very best.

It should also be noted that the sports of Athletics, Cycling and Swimming continued to have sustained podium success, achieving at World and European level competition leading into across the quadrennial. The ability to perform and achieve consistently under pressure across a cycle are what the system needs to aspire to as a whole, no matter how ambitious, this may seem.

In addition to this there were a range of first time Olympians who have benefitted from the Paralympic experience and who have positioned themselves well for Tokyo. The need to balance scrutiny of performance and results with an assessment of the impact of an Olympic experience on an athlete, should not be forgotten. Team leader and athlete feedback reinforced this theme, with the below extract capturing this context perfectly.

“A notable point of the Paralympic team in Rio was the emergence of a group of younger athletes who produced a number of superb performances. This is an indicator of the Paralympic system’s ability to deliver repeatable and sustainable success.”<sup>1</sup>

## KEY FINDINGS

1. While the overall metrics indicate that Rio was not as successful a Games as London 2012, Paralympic Ireland achieved its primary Rio performance targets.
2. There is currently a mixed approach to setting clearly defined performance targets for the Games, with both Performance and Participation outcomes targeted at Rio 2016.
3. Sports programmes with significant investment from PI, sustained medal success across the quadrennial, not only at the Games in Rio.
4. There is an emerging group of young talented athletes who performed well in Rio and are positioned positively for the next cycle.

### Factors impacting performance

**Objective: To identify the particular factors which contributed to or impacted upon the performances at the Games.**

As an area of assessment this can be challenging without understanding the intricacies of each sport and athletes’ preparation leading into Rio and performance at the actual event. What we do know is that there are a set of non-negotiable factors such as the quality of coaching, the daily performance environment, sport science service provision and competition that are critical to an athlete’s on-going development and performance. However, the reality for Para athletes and the dilemma for PI and sports is the imbalance between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ and the ability of athletes to be full-time as opposed to part-time. As a factor this was the single and most consistent message from athletes and coaches.

To explore this further, feedback from athletes identified three key aspects that they feel impact on their ability to develop, improve and perform across the cycle. These were insufficient staffing and sport science servicing, time for and access to training, and personal funding and sustenance. Additionally several athletes feel that in their sport they are impacted by the inability of their coaches and staff to be full time. With the exception of Athletics and Swimming, a reoccurring theme is the lack of capacity of Paralympic sports, which in turn can impact on capability building in both the athlete and coach.

<sup>1</sup> Extract from Sport Ireland Report to the Sport Ireland High Performance Advisory Committee

In Rio issues such as training venues and transport presented as inhibitors to performance. While it is recognized that some things, especially at a Games, are out of the control of PI, athletes still feel that more needs to be done ensure that host countries understand the impact on performance of dealing with day to day logistical challenges and issues. However in this area, there were inconsistencies in feedback and in most cases these came from athletes who are better supported, and consequently better prepared. This inequity is one of the biggest challenges for PI when it is clearly known that there are not enough resources or capacity in the high performance system to cover the support that is required and potentially should be afforded to athletes who have the potential to qualify and compete at the Paralympics.

A specific topic of discussion is the value and scheduling of multi-sport camps across the cycle. Again opinion was divided, but it seems that for the Coaches in particular a more open consultation process and potentially debate, needs to occur to determine whether these traditional vehicles for bringing sports together is a contemporary model that enhances rather than detracts from performance. For sports that are short of funding for their high performance programmes, the investment that PI makes in bringing these events together is seen as questionable.

Finally, and while this also gets picked up further into the report, there is a need to address a range of sports science and performance enhancement aspect both during the cycle and for the Tokyo Paralympics. Nutrition, recovery, medical and physiotherapy support were all identified as things that when limited or not available at all, really inhibit the development and performance of athletes.

## KEY FINDINGS

5. As is already recognized by PI there is inequity in how sports and athletes are supported both financially and in service provision at the Paralympic Games and during the 4 years leading into a Games.
6. There is a polarized view across NGB's, team leaders, coaches and athletes as to the value of the PI multi-sport camps that are conducted across the quadrennial cycle.
7. Sport science providers and coaches believe that a greater emphasis is required on educating and supporting athletes in the areas of nutrition and recovery techniques.
8. Additional medical and physiotherapy support is needed both at the Games and across the cycle.
9. Recovery facilities and equipment for Tokyo needs to be improved on what was available in Rio.

### Effectiveness of high performance quadrennial planning and structure

**Objective: To review and assess the performance impact of: strategy, annual performance plans and preparation programme of the sport over the quadrennial to include:**

The year following a Paralympic Games is always challenging however it also offers an opportunity to re-establish direction and to create momentum. Consequently post London and in early 2013 the 'Road to Rio' plan was established to drive and underpin planning and operations for the Rio quadrennial. A key feature of the plan was improved service delivery to athletes through the establishment of a Paralympic Service Hub based at the Sport Ireland Institute. This hub allowed athletes to access a range of services specifically tailored for them. Additionally, it created a more multi-disciplinary approach to athletes, coaches and practitioners working together, sharing knowledge and monitoring training and performance more closely.

In addition, in early 2013 Paralympics Ireland moved into their new offices at Irish Sport Headquarters. Strategically this move was particularly relevant as it created the potential for greater connectedness with other NGBs and significantly, the Sport Ireland Institute. This positioning on the National Sports Campus continues to provide opportunities for further enhancement of the Sport Department leading into Tokyo.

In the next section there is reference to the HP staff structure and changes that occurred across the Rio cycle. Putting this aside there is a strong evidence base of 'good' high performance planning in the 2 PI sports programmes and athletes during the qualification, preparation and competition phases of the Games. However, some of the planning across other sports is haphazard and this area would benefit from a more strategic approach that focuses on a systemic set of frameworks and tools that allow for more consistent performance planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting.

To drive a more aligned, focused and collaborative system, the following aspects of high performance planning have been identified as things that may enhance the system:

- Sport Programme categorisation and funding framework;
- Athlete Nomenclature categorisation matrix;
- Individual athlete funding framework, aligned to Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland carding programmes;
- Sport programme funding framework;
- Individual Athlete Performance Plans;
- Sports Science and Service Provision Inventory, and
- Sport Programme monitoring and reporting framework.

## KEY FINDINGS

10. There is evidence of detailed planning for Rio across PI programme sports, some NGB supported programmes, and for targeted athletes. However, this area needs to be more systemic with a common framework and clearly defined targets for each sport, athletes, and support staff (i.e. technical coach, S&C coach).
11. There are a range of common-place high performance frameworks that are not currently being utilized by PI, a 'check and challenge' audit of their high performance capacity and capability would assist in identifying the gaps in this area.

## Leadership Model and Staff Structure

In respect of leadership and the Sport Department staff model, post London has seen significant changes and restructuring of roles that may well have destabilized operations early in the cycle, and certainly again, 6 months out from the Games. In 2013 Nancy Chillingworth then High Performance Director (HPD), went on maternity leave and as a result, this position was changed significantly in 2014 to be covered by a consultant (part time) on a 12 month contract, being assisted by a HP Committee. This committee was only in place across 2013 and while potentially a valuable support mechanism for the HPD, was disbanded.

This arrangement continued until the incumbent HPD, Dave Malone was appointed to the role in 2015. Similarly in March, 2016 the Performance Assistant, a key part of the Sport team, departed PI to take up a new job in another company. In replacing this role, the job title and description was changed to that of Performance Operations Manager, a position that is currently filled by Niamh Buffini. Both of these individuals are seen to be doing a very good job, under, at times, trying conditions.

While it is hard to measure the impact of changes in key personnel and role design had on performance in Rio, at an operational level there may have been some impact, for example increased workload on individuals. It is also somewhat unusual to change the operational nature of key positions, mid cycle and prior to a Games. Continuity and role clarity play a vital part in delivering any sort of plan, and even perceived uncertainty by internal staff, may well have created some confusion among NGBS and stakeholders.

Feedback from the HPD, the CDM, and relevant stakeholders highlighted aspects of the CEO role in respect of HP matters across the quadrennial and at the Games. It is imperative that the HPD has unhindered autonomy, while remaining accountable for high performance outcomes. Appropriate communication and reporting mechanisms between the CEO and HPD need to be clearly defined and

performance management should be planned to also capture this. This framework then needs to be actioned and followed through on to avoid micro-management, as in high performance this limits the ability of key personnel to lead with authority and a consistent message.

Additionally, accountability and professionalism of staff was presented as an area that needs a more consistent approach. It was suggested that staff need to have a HP mindset at all times. This mindset balances the needs of the organization, the sport, and themselves, with a culture of excellence. Under a well-planned and structured performance management framework possible negative incidents would occur rarely. However, it may also require the HPD to be stronger in setting expectations and driving accountability. Staff accountability and management appears to be an area where PI as an organization needs some work (also addressed later in the report).

In respect of the actual Games, the leadership model of Chef de Mission (CDM), Team Leaders and clearly defined roles for PI HP staff, was seen as highly successful. However, there remains some concerns around the appointment process of team leaders and personnel in some sports. The contribution and work of Denis Toomey as the CDM was recognized broadly by his peers, staff and athletes of being of a very high standard. Denis's very comprehensive report and neutrality (perhaps with the exception of cycling) has also helped validate a range of themes and pieces of feedback that are often difficult to objectify. This critical role would benefit from an earlier appointment and potentially an elevation to staff status within the organization.

## KEY FINDINGS

12. Changes to the HP leadership staff structure and associated staff across the four year Rio cycle may well have had a destabilizing effect that impacted on operations and the overall performance of Team Ireland.
13. Given the recent changes in personnel within PI, it is imperative to have clarity

across all HP roles and responsibilities.

14. The HPD should continue to develop a HP mindset and culture across all programmes in order to replicate success in the future.
15. The CDM, a position with voluntary status, carried out his role at the Rio Paralympic Games to a very high standard.

### Coaching - (science, medicine and lifestyle support)

Two priority areas were identified to support and enhance coaching. Firstly, the ongoing professional development of head coaches, assistant coaches, and specialist coaches was highlighted as a key area. Secondly, increasing coaches understanding of, and access to, contemporary sport science practice and performance analysis (PA) was also identified as a priority. Some coaches also highlighted Sport Ireland Institute's PEP programme as an example of the sort of education and training they need greater access to. Outside of the sports sciences, understanding themselves and others, developing more effective management techniques and building capability in key 'soft skills' were some of the areas that were highlighted for development.

In respect of performance analysis, there is a growing recognition within the Para sports of the importance of this service to coaches and athletes. During the Rio cycle Cycling and Swimming were the main focus, with some PA delivery also afforded to Athletics and advisory input provided to Football. This reflects two situations, one being the hierarchy and priority around service provision and the other, the readiness of some sports to embrace and support performance analysis. There appears to be great opportunities in this area to partner with Universities and to source undergraduates for practical support, PI should proactively continue to pursue this.

It is also evident that for PI supported sports that the integrated planning and delivery of sport science services has been improved since London 2012. Of course, for sports outside this group, this does not mean that all coaches are happy with the current level of servicing or the service providers they work with. It is also seen as imperative by coaches that service providers

going to Tokyo actually know the athletes they are going to work with well before the event. While it is recognized that the multi-sport and pre-games camps can be a vehicle for this, there need for more touch points between providers and athletes in training and competition environments. Coaches also continued to highlight physiotherapy and medical services as an area of frustration and needing increased capacity. Further feedback on this area is reflected below.

## KEY FINDINGS

16. Coach education and development needs to be prioritized with a greater emphasis on coaches having access to education on modern sport science practices and access to a PI driven programme akin to the ISS PEP programme.
17. Performance analysis support and capacity needs to be increased leading into qualification for Tokyo, at a minimum two personnel are required in this area.

### Performance Services – Sport Ireland Institute role and effectiveness

Performance services to athletes and coaches are provided principally through the Sport Ireland Institute, SINI and a small group of private providers. While it is acknowledged that SINI have played an integral role in supporting a number of athletes in Rio, the focus of the following information pertains to the Sport Ireland Institute. As would be expected Athletics, Swimming and to a lesser extent Cycling, are serviced significantly by the Sport Ireland Institute to the point that some athletes recognize it as their primary training base. Other sports however feel that they are receiving minimal or no support, sometimes reflecting an over-expectation and lack of understanding of what, as an entity, the Sport Ireland Institute can and can't do.

As previously highlighted the inequity of service provision by the Sport Ireland Institute is something that is a reality of not just Paralympic sport but able-bodied programmes as well. There is an overall lack of capacity at the Sport Ireland Institute that in the opinion

of this consultant, is difficult to solve in the short term unless it becomes a priority for Sport Ireland Institute. In respect of the Sport Ireland Institute workforce, there is also a reality that not all staff are employed or on contract to Sport Ireland Institute. In addition, while there are adequate checks and balances on day to day duties and performance, some staff are full time, others are consultants and some balance private practice with their servicing of Para athletes.

The key to this model being effective is for all staff to have clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities including performance targets that align to agreed work schedules, competition and camp involvement and day to day delivery of services to sports and targeted athletes. As an operational model without these things in place, there can sometimes be reduced impact although broad based feedback suggests that PI sports and carded athletes from outside these sports, recognize the very good work that Sport Ireland Institute staff do and the important role they play in training and competition.

In respect for the relationship between the Sport Ireland Institute and PI, it appears that they are working very well together in respect of planning and servicing of priority athletes. There is a long term relationship and history between the two organizations that has placed Para sport and athletes well within the Sport Ireland Institute roster. It is apparent from a review of relevant sport specific planning documents that there is evidence of good practice in how provision is planned, delivered and monitored. The effective delivery of services was highlighted by the HPD and the coaches. More importantly, it was recognized by some of the athletes who benefit from these services. From the feedback and data I had access to, the key message was that the planned 'sport science team' approach to service provision is seen as working well and producing results. As a case study, a review of data from the Swimming programme shows measurable improvement from athletes in a range of different performance areas. As an aspiration, PI needs to strive to make this reality for a small group of athletes the reality for a larger number of talented athletes.

The two challenges identified for Sport Ireland Institute are firstly, the limitations they have in providing more services to athletes across a broader range of sports on site and at the campus, and secondly, working with PI on how to best support high priority athletes who are remote to Dublin and cannot easily travel to receive support.

While there are some individual examples of non-Institute providers working with sports and individual athletes outside of the PI programmes, there is a sense that this still occurs rather haphazardly. The opportunity for this to be more coordinated and for a number of additional PI HP training and sport science hubs to be established, was just one thing that was presented during the consultation process.

## KEY FINDINGS

18. While there is a recognition that the ISS is under-resourced and at full capacity, there is a need for the Sport Ireland Institute and PI to continue to promote their charter, role and responsibilities to NGBs, coaches and athletes to ensure that expectations of support are understood and managed effectively.
19. The PI/Institute relationship is effective and impacts positively on athletes and coaches.
20. Solutions and a flexible model needs to be identified to service athletes based outside of Dublin and who cannot regularly access Sport Ireland Institute providers. This may lead to PI exploring the potential of establishing more formalized PI Sport science hubs.
21. The three sports of athletics, cycling, and swimming have been supported very well by the Sport Ireland Institute with athletes achieving measurable improvement in performance.
22. The 'PI Sport Science' team as a concept and operationally works well and has been positive for staff and athletes. However, all staff should have clearly defined roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and performance targets.

## HP investment, including that provided by Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland

The high performance budget is constantly under pressure with an over-reliance on Sport Ireland funding. This is not uncommon for peak bodies and NGBs and is symptomatic of Ireland's overall lack of investment into high performance sport. It should also be acknowledged that alternative revenue streams and one-off funding, while sometimes present, can still be difficult for PI to sustain. While PI work hard to attain sponsorship, sustaining meaningful external income is haphazard. Post-London there was a reduction in sponsorship that impacted on the 2013 budget and while this was somewhat rectified across 2014-2016, it is still an area that challenges PI, and also NGBs.

From the current HP budget, there are direct allocations to 8 sports only, Athletics, Cycling, Equestrian, Football, Power-lifting, Swimming, Table Tennis and Triathlon with 5 additional sports, Boccia, Canoeing, Rowing, Sailing, and Shooting not receiving funding from PI, though their athletes can receive SI and SINI carding and support services if eligible. Carding may well be an area that needs to be looked at with regards to how the investment impacts across sports and the elite athlete population. However, I believe as a theme, this is beyond the realms of this review and is a matter for Sport Ireland to pursue.

## KEY FINDINGS

23. The PI budget for high performance remains inadequate for providing the best possible support to NGBs, athletes, and coaches. This aligns to an overall underinvestment by Government in high performance sport operations and outcomes.
24. A number of NGBs need to invest more in their Para HP programmes and ensure that the programmes are more visible and have higher priority.
25. The current athlete carding scheme may need to be looked at to ensure that the overall investment has a performance impact for individuals and their sport.

### NGB Engagement: Campaign Rio

**Objective: To review and assess the engagement, support and interaction of NGB's with Paralympics Ireland over the quadrennial to enhance the performance of the Irish Team at Rio 2016.**

There are twenty affiliated members of Paralympics Ireland, within four distinct categories:

1. Disability Specific Multisport NGBs
2. Sport Specific NGBs
3. Sports within the Disability Multisport NGBs
4. Sports governed internationally by the International Paralympic Committee Athletics and Swimming fall into this last category, and so are governed directly by PI, with in-house teams managing and coaching those sports.

With regards to the sport-specific NGBs, we reference cycling separately here below, given its successes at Rio, and then the other sport specific NGBs collectively. Engagement and support of NGBs appears to be haphazard, with the different relationships with PI and some uncertainty about what role PI should play, at times creating confusion and tensions.

The sports of Swimming and Athletics sit fully under PI, rather than within their NGB, these sports are supported predominantly through the HP team and receive close to 50% of the overall performance funding budget. This allows them to have dedicated staff and programme budget allocations that align to their annual plans. As a model, while polarizing in respect of whether it is the only and best model, it works well for these sports. A range of other sports are supported through PI but with less resources allocated, while Para Cycling receives some direct funding from PI, but is part of their NGB, Cycling Ireland (CI).

Medal success in Rio was achieved through the strength of these 3 sport programmes. In particular, these programmes benefited from a more comprehensive annual planning, monitoring and reporting process, integrated service provision delivered through PI's Sport Science and Medicine team, the Sport Ireland Institute and SINI and high quality coaching performances from within the system.

### **Cycling Ireland (CI)**

The CI Paralympic Programme was the most successful Irish performance programme in Rio 2016. With five medals, including two Gold, the programme exceeded all stretch targets and surpassed the outstanding performance at the previous Paralympics, four years ago. Furthermore, all of the 2016 Paralympic medallists were different athletes from those who medalled in 2012, providing some indication of systemic delivery. The training base in Mallorca has worked very well. Overall there is a good working relationship between the two NGBs, at CEO through to coaching level, with some lessons learned retained within the system over the course of three cycles. PI support the funding of the CI para programme, with costs of other elements being shared (e.g. communications officer at the Games). A legacy issue around recognition has been overcome within CI, although a question remains about this at Board level.

The delivery of the Cycling Paralympics programme is heavily reliant on voluntary contributions and the Performance Coach's current delivery capacity has been exceeded and is unsustainable. Ideally the Team Leader would be a staff member rather than a volunteer, but this is part of a wider resource issue and may not be possible to resolve. Both Hand Cyclists were late call-ups to the programme and did not feel as though they were part of the HP Para Programme and received only limited support. The support services team and plan sits between CI and PI, with neither having full ownership of it, so there are muddy waters around accountability and reporting, and also regarding final decision around selection.

One issue of note is that the number of athletes coming through at an emerging talent level could be a cause for concern, as is the quality of staffing of the development team. Feedback from Para cycling representatives suggests that there remain perennial issues around where the Para programme sits within the sport and what high performance investment, including human resources, are required to support the Para programme. However, with the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) only recognizing CI as the governing body for entry into Para competition, this is unlikely to change.

### Other Sport Specific NGBs

There is not much evidence of the other sport-specific NGBs being fully committed to Paralympics. Each NGB nominated a team leader for their sport, with a mixture of paid staff and volunteers. In some cases, it was not the most suitable person, but was the best available person. At times this resulted in poor communications, poor data collection, tension and delays. The feeling persists that for some member federations the Paralympic programme is a nuisance as they simply do not have the resources for it, and the question remains whether these federations should have the opportunity to opt in or out. It is challenging for PI to remain on task with so many varied stakeholders, many of whom do not view their para participants as HP.

It is also challenging for PI to have enough day to day contact with the sports, due to the stretch on resources. Also it is not clear on the PI organizational chart who has responsibility for engaging with the NGBs in relation to their Para-sport. Ideally there would be a relationship throughout the quadrennial with the NGBs, rather than in the build-up to the Games, as it is currently. It was noted that if an NGBs PD views the para element as important, then that will filter down through the organization. There is also the feeling that PI tolerates poor engagement from NGBs and there is no penalty for individual sports missing deadlines. Overall the lack of shared performance planning across Irish sport limits PI's ability to effectively successful Paralympic HP plans across the NGBs. Ideally PI would be in a position to offer resources to the NGBs (e.g. offering para-coaching), but that is currently impossible with the limited resources available. It may be worth considering a structured NGB stakeholder group to foster relationships and generate contact throughout the cycle.

There are some NGBs who are taking it seriously, such as Triathlon, who made the most of Rio as a planning and learning opportunity for future cycles. While high performance outcomes may well benefit from every NGB taking responsibility for Para sport, the reality is that a high percentage of these bodies do not have the high performance capacity or capability to do this. This however should not

deter the debate around what performance models/s are most appropriate from occurring.

### KEY FINDINGS

26. There is a perception amongst smaller sports that PI needs to assess their core business and either support all sports equally, or allow smaller NGBs, with PI support, to assume full responsibility for Para programmes and athletes.
27. The CI Paralympic programme was the most successful Irish performance programme in Rio 2016, and there is evidence of systemic delivery, but it is highly reliant on volunteers.
28. The system is highly dependent on volunteers across multiple sports and the focus of NGBs on their 'para' sport is questionable given their own limited resources.

## PART 2 – Per Facilitator Maeve Buckley

### Governance and management effectiveness

**Objective: To review and assess the level of support provided by Paralympics Ireland for the preparation for the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, including the governance structure within NGB Governance of the Sport Department and High Performance Programme**

The overall Board governance is perceived as being strong, with clearly delineated governance structures, a well-balanced Board make-up, and regular well-attended meetings. Standards at Board/CEO level and throughout the organization are high, and there is an ethos of fairness. There is a good mutual respect between the Board and the CEO. There is an overall question as to whether the Board has a deep enough understanding of HP, and whether it has enough direct line of sight of HP (the PD presents to the Board once or twice a year directly), or adequate HP reporting, with commercial issues and funding requirements taking precedence.

#### **Management Structures**

The CEO is a strong leader of the organization and well regarded by key stakeholders and the executive team, whilst there is a solid team of well-regarded professionals at management level. There is evidence of some centralization of decision making into the CEO. Whilst there is a de-facto management team, management team meetings can slip at times, which can be a weakness. A functioning management team could align the management goals of the communications, commercial and HP teams and break up silos, whilst providing autonomy back to those roles, and improving internal communications. There is no functioning HP advisory group/oversight committee (as addressed elsewhere in this document), which equally could enhance, drive and support the decision making in that area.

#### **Role of Performance Director**

Dave Malone, current Performance Director, moved into that role from Performance Manager, and is well liked by his peers, and perceived as very valuable as a 'go-to' person

for the sports. There are issues around the clarity of the Performance Director role, and there can be tensions around the ownership of tasks and accountability. Communications between the PD and CEO were weak at times, and this sometimes affected the preparation for Rio.

#### **Role of Chef de Mission**

The Chef de Mission for Rio was recruited via an advertised recruitment process, and was appointed about two years out from the Games, on a voluntary basis. There were some issues around the appointment to the role, and at that time the CEO was not supported in his view that the role should be a paid (non-voluntary) role. It is beyond the capacity of either a volunteer or an existing staff member to deliver this role to its full demands. This role would be best served by somebody on a full-time contracted basis. PI were lucky in that the 2016 Chef de Mission was able to give it so much of his time, but it is a challenging role, and one likely to suffer from burnout if not managed carefully. The existing role description of the Chef de Mission is highly detailed and operational, and whilst it is an operational role, the job description should be modified to recognize the seniority of the role. There is an overarching view that PI was very successful in delivering the operational end of the Games, from logistics, to transport and travel, and all credit should be given to the Chef de Mission and his back-office team for their work in delivering a smooth experience for the athletes.

#### **Relations with International Federation**

This was recognized by PI as an area of focus over the last quadrennial, and the CEO is well respected and regarded in the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). It has been challenging to date to get Irish representation on any of the committees and work continues to be undertaken to position Ireland at the forefront of decision making in the international movement.

#### **HR Processes**

Paralympics Ireland has grown exponentially and successfully over the last number of cycles, with the team and organization growing. This naturally leads to an increased requirement for human resource process and function, from

role planning to performance reviews, and this is now starting to lag behind the development of the organization. Resource is very stretched in the organization across all levels, which naturally allows for non-critical functions like HR administration to slip, or for processes to be slow (e.g. filling critical roles like that of the operations manager who left in early 2016, and left a gap in the organization at a critical time). It is also difficult for the CEO/Board to reward success in terms of pay or other incentives.

There is a feeling of disconnect between role descriptions and actual roles, or of roles not being given autonomy, or on the flipside of responsibility not being taken. A lot of contracts finish at the end of the 2016 cycle, which adds tension to the organization. The feeling persists that learnings from reviews are not implemented and lessons learned not integrated back into the process, and that there can be low levels of induction, performance planning, responsibility, annual reviews, team communications, succession planning. It is felt that conflict is not dealt with at times internally.

### Management Systems

There has been little resource to invest in information systems, and there is thus a lack of data to support projects, and time can be wasted in searching for data that should be on a system.

## KEY FINDINGS

29. Paralympics Ireland is well governed, with a strong Board and CEO.
30. The Chef de Mission role should be undertaken on a paid contract basis for the next cycle.
31. There is a good executive management team in place, and that team dynamic can be further developed through maintaining consistent weekly management team meetings throughout the year, and the implementation of robust HR practices.

### Delivery of quadrennial planning

#### Objective: To review and assess the delivery of the 2013-2016 Quadrennial Plan and the Road to Rio plan

- The Strategic Plan 2014-2017 Securing Success Together, had five strategic goals, as follows:
1. Maximise medal potential of Irish Athletes at European & world Championships and Paralympic games
  2. Establish a Talent Identification model and performance pathway for Irish Paralympic athletes
  3. Pursue organisational excellence, underpinned by sustainable resources
  4. Increase public awareness, deepen understanding and build support for Irish Paralympic sport
  5. Achieve an international voice to serve and influence the global Paralympic movement

Overall, it can be said to have achieved goals 1 and 4 (medal potential and public awareness), and have had some success at goals 3 and 5 (organizational excellence and international voice) and with goal 2 still to be achieved (talent ID and performance pathways).

The CEO has a challenging role balancing participation and elite, and the question remains about the overall clarity of the mission - 'Leading elite athletes with a disability to Paralympic Games success'. Maximising medal potential was the primary goal of the quadrennial plan, whilst the stated targets at the outset of the Rio cycle (Rio 2016 targets, published in 2013) also included team size being in excess of 50 athletes, and increasing the number of sports being represented on the Irish team to more than 10, both of which would appear to be participation targets. This dual focus had an implication for the work programmes for the HP team.

By the final year of the cycle targets had been modified to support to podium success the three key sports of athletics, cycling and swimming, with a modified level of support to the sports below that. This focus is perceived as having been successful for this cycle, but needs to be constantly reviewed and maintained. The Road to Rio plan was perceived

as having been a useful and appropriate document to support the successful delivery of the Games. Given that many other nations have adopted the UK/NZ targeted investment model of HP sport, the feeling is that Ireland will slip behind in future in this ultra-competitive environment, where Paralympics has become just as competitive as Olympics, and Ireland is competing against teams with massive HP budgets and large full-time professional HP teams. The feeling also is that the system remains athlete-led in Ireland, rather than coach-led, with the majority of funding going to individual athletes rather than into programmes.

Paralympics Ireland struggles to support all areas of its plan to the level it would like, due to limited resources. There can be a drain on elite medal prospects, as the budget is spread out across a large number of participant sports. There is also a lack of resource to support effective development. There is a requirement for development, and to work with emerging talent, specifically to 'Establish a Talent ID Model and Performance Pathway for Irish Paralympic Athletes' as stated in the Strategic Plan 2014-2017. The operational work plan for this area exists, but due to stretched resources in the organization, it has not been possible to implement this plan. The feeling is that one or two staff members fully focused on development as a ring-fenced resource could have a big impact in this area. This is the only one of the five strategic areas in that plan that remains outstanding.

Overall PI works hard in having a clear and well communicated strategic plan, but lack of financial resource prevents it from achieving all it would like to achieve.

## KEY FINDINGS

32. There is a question that lies at the heart of all activities undertaken by Paralympics Ireland, about whether the organization is truly geared towards elite sport, or participation, and the broader remit of supporting Paralympic sport at any level.
33. Paralympics Ireland has a strong level of strategic planning, and delivering against strategic plans.

34. A high priority area for development is the need to establish a Talent ID model and performance pathway for Irish Paralympic athletes.

### Strategic partnerships and stakeholders: engagement and relationships

#### **Objective: To review and assess the engagement and interaction of Paralympics Ireland with Sport Ireland and the Sport Ireland Institute over the quadrennial cycle** **Sport Ireland Institute**

The Sport Ireland Institute (Institute) and Paralympics Ireland (PI) have had a long standing relationship, especially on the science and medicine side. The services team operates as one big team, although with some providers contracted directly by PI (e.g. medical, sports psychology), and others by the Sport Ireland Institute (strength & conditioning, lifestyle). There is a quarterly operational meeting, as well as an informal monthly PD/Institute meeting, and the Sport Ireland Institute has delivered a programme specifically for Team Leaders within PI, whilst several coaches have participated on the Sport Ireland Institute PEP (Pursuit of Excellence) programme.

The Sport Ireland Institute have challenged PI around its HP focus and are perceived as having been a big help for Rio. Overall it has been a good working relationship, with positive engagement and clarity on both sides. It is now at a stage where it needs some changes to positively structure it for the next cycle and beyond. Services are expensive and form a large part of the PI budget, and thus need to be as suitable as possible for the job required. Due to stretching of resources within the Sport Ireland Institute, the services are not always available when athletes need them (e.g. outside of Monday - Friday 0900 - 1700) or can be behind schedule.

#### **Sports Institute Northern Ireland**

The Sports Institute Northern Ireland (SINI) delivers support services to a number of the NI athletes, who greatly value those services. There can be a feeling of disconnect on both sides, as planning deadlines are different, and there is a low level of integration of the overall systems (Republic and Northern Irish) at a

strategic level. Greater alignment of the at a strategic level, would ensure greater sharing of information and would minimize bureaucracy, both of which will ultimately serve the athletes better. The Sporting Winners Investment Programme 2017-2021 will be the framework for all investment decisions made by SINI over the next cycle. The deadline for submissions for that was September 2nd 2016, making it difficult for PI to achieve that deadline.

Overall SINI and Institute are acknowledged by many within the organization, from athletes to coaches to management, as having been significant contributory factors in the medal success at Rio.

### Sport Ireland

Relations between PI and Sport Ireland are good, with an open dialogue, and regular contact between the two organisations. Future sustainability of success at Paralympic level is based around resources, and the current Government funding available to Paralympics Ireland is inadequate to maintain High Performance success over the next cycles, as other competing nations move forward apace and the Paralympic Games becomes much more competitive. There is the feeling that if the same level of funding is maintained, then the results will inevitably start to slip. There remains the question of 'parity of esteem' and whether Paralympics receives comparable funding to Olympics, and whether a Paralympic medal is perceived as being of the same value as an Olympic medal from a funding perspective.

### KEY FINDINGS

35. Paralympics Ireland as an organization is perceived well externally. Key stakeholders (Funding partners, service providers, NGBs, media) view the organisation positively, and PI are perceived as being easy to work with, across all levels of the organization.
36. The relationship with the Sport Ireland Institute has been fruitful – it should now be recalibrated to best serve the needs of PI athletes through the coming cycle.
37. Greater alignment of the Sport Ireland Institute and SINI at a strategic level would

likely provide for more integrated service provision across the island.

38. There are good relations between Sport Ireland and Paralympics Ireland.

### Communications and commercial relationships

#### Objective: To review and report on Paralympics Ireland's Communications and Commercial Programmes over the quadrennial cycle

#### Communications

The main strategic priority for the Communications team in the quadrennial cycle into Rio was the relationship with RTÉ. Having been somewhat broken post-2012, that relationship delivered very successful coverage of Rio 2016. RTÉ coverage of Paralympics 2012 was comprised of an hour long highlights programme every evening, whilst for Rio RTÉ Sport significantly increased coverage across television, radio, online and mobile, with a mixture of highlights and live coverage, with studio presenters and panellists. Overall it was perceived by both sides as being very successful. Whilst the level of coverage committed to initially appeared ambitious and challenging, the ambition is now to do the same and more for Tokyo 2020.

The reasons contributing to this success were multiple:

1. Financial support of Allianz Ireland as media sponsor
2. Excellent media team on-site at the games, including team-lead of John Fulham and contracted freelancer Cliona Foley, delivering a well-planned service
3. The PI Communications Director sitting in-studio with RTE for the duration of the Games providing immediate support and answers
4. Great access to the athletes for interview
5. A straight and positive working relationship between both parties

Certain sports e.g. cycling and swimming, sent a communications officer to the Games, which meant that coverage was maximized to the full. Emphasis was also placed on the needs of print and digital, with a large number of

journalists attending the Games, with support from Paralympics Ireland, as well as dedicated sports photography agency. The overall result was one of PI and its athletes being positioned in the right context in the national media. Ideally PI would be in a position to measure its communications but doesn't have the resource to undertake this.

For Tokyo it should be decided now who will be the communications team on-site, ideally with Communications Director at the Games, and a strong team underneath, as well as a team member in-house at RTE. It will also be important to clarify the communications process in Tokyo, with one point of contact on the media side, and with access to team leaders (rather than direct to athletes, or via the Chef de Mission). For the duration of the quadrennial, internal communications should be improved, with the interdependency between HP, communications and commercial reviewed. It is a challenge to generate interest and push content during three years of the quadrennial.

### Commercial

The Commercial lead has done well in generating funds over the last quadrennial, given the challenging external environment, and with a lot of focus internally and from the Board, given the requirement for funds. It can be challenging outside of Games time to have a clear proposition to offer to prospective sponsors, whilst broadcast coverage of the 2016 Games was only fully confirmed during the summer, putting off potential commitment from sponsors. Allianz have been a very important and successful commercial partner for PI, and played a huge part in the success of Rio. A lot of work has been done by the Commercial team in generating leads at the right level in Corporate Ireland – whilst some of these did not come to pass despite many months of work, the work itself has positioned PI at the right level amongst opinion leaders, and some of these relationships may well crystallize into commercial relationships over the next cycle.

A particular success of this quadrennial has been the Commercial Advisory Group, an arms length group of individuals who operate in the

media/commercial sphere and have an interest in Paralympics, and serve to open doors and generate commercial interest. The gala ball, a new initiative of this group, was also a strong commercial success.

It can be a sensitive balancing act retaining clarity of focus, whilst also being flexible around a commercial partner's requirement, for example around the development of community based programmes, which in turn may be seen to dilute the elite focus. Some effort has been made to develop a charity proposition, with some successes, but this has been challenging due to limited resource and lack of charity fundraising systems (e.g. CRM, donor databases) and DNA within the organization. The move into charity and CSR can seem to be at odd with a performance driven commercial strategy, which seeks to align commercial performance and athlete performance.

The coming quadrennial looks positive, with the Commercial Advisory Group in place, and Allianz and RTE already committed to Tokyo. The challenges over the next cycle will be for PI to retain clarity of focus in how it presents itself commercially, whilst continuing to work out the visibility of the sport over the cycle.

### KEY FINDINGS

39. The media have a positive impression of Paralympics Ireland and relay a positive impression of the athletes and their achievements to the general public, with RTE now a key media partner.
40. It is a challenge at both a commercial and communications level to generate interest outside of Games year, and both departments have done well in building key strategic relationships in RTE and Allianz.
41. The constant requirement of PI to generate funds externally, due to the underinvestment by Government, creates a constant commercial pressure on the organization. Securing alternative and sustainable revenue to support the HP budget is an ongoing challenge.

## APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was completed by Paralympics Ireland in advance of Rio 2016, giving a snapshot of the health of the PI system in advance of the Games. The purpose of this was to provide Sport Ireland with a picture of where the sport was at leading into the Games, and also to inform the agenda around the post-Games review.

After Rio, an online survey was conducted of the PI athletes, CEO/ Board members, Performance Directors and Coaches/Support Staff (between 16th and 26th September 2016). The results of this survey were written up in a report, outlining the key quantitative and qualitative data underpinning four themes. Those themes were Preparation and Readiness for the Games, Games Performance, Games Experience, and NGB Governance of the Games.

Maeve Buckley and Patricia Heberle were contracted as facilitators at the end of October to complete the review process.

Using the above documents as preparatory documents, we conducted telephone and face-to-face interviews with the PI directors and staff, as well as service providers and externals, on dates between October 26th and November 15th. The purpose of the interviews was to tease out in greater depth specific themes and to develop a richer understanding of the key areas critical to PI's performance at Rio 2016. We also used existing PI documentation to inform our discussions and interviews.

This Rio Review document is a summary of the information derived from all three stages above.

## APPENDIX 2: LIST OF THOSE CONSULTED

**The following are those with whom we spoke as part of this consultation process:**

Liam Harbison - CEO  
 Dave Malone - High Performance Director  
 Denis Toomey - Chef de Mission  
 Niamh Buffini - Performance Operations Manager  
 Sinead Naughton - Communications Director  
 John Fulham - Board member  
 Eimear Breathnach - Board member  
 Brendan Jennings - Board member  
 Patrick Haslett - Commercial Director  
 Paul McDermott - Sport Ireland  
 Phil Moore - Sport Ireland Institute  
 Shaun Ogle, Sports Institute Northern Ireland  
 Geoff Liffey - CEO, Cycling Ireland  
 Cliona O'Leary - RTE Sport  
 Dr Joe Conway - Chief Medical Officer  
 Stephen McIvor - Team Sport Psychologist  
 Phelim Lynch - Support Coach (Cycling)  
 James Nolan - Head of Paralympic Athletics  
 Dave Sweeney - Throws Coach (Athletics)  
 Neil Delahaye - Paracycling Coach  
 Tommy McGowan - Team Leader (Cycling)  
 Eamon Tilley - Team Leader (Triathlon)  
 Hailey Burke - Team Leader (Swimming)  
 Jim Laverty - Swimming Coach  
 Michael McKillop, Athlete  
 Jason Smyth, Athlete  
 Patrick Monahan - Athlete  
 Catherine Walsh - Athlete  
 Declan Slevin - Athlete  
 Ailbhe Kelly - Athlete  
 Orla Comerford - Athlete  
 Noelle Lenihan - Athlete

**In addition, submissions were received received from:**

Alan Swanton - Performance Analyst, Sport Ireland Institute  
 Toni Rossiter - Performance Physiologist & ISS Service Lead for Paralympics  
 Rena McCarron - Para Table Tennis athlete (London and Rio Olympian)  
 Dr. Joe Conway - Medical Officers Report  
 Eimear O'Brien - Athletics chaperone  
 Heather Boyle - Communications Officer, Cycling Ireland  
 Ronan Rooney - Para Table Tennis

### APPENDIX 3: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

13. Paralympics Ireland Strategic Plan 2014 – 2017 ‘Securing Success Together’
14. Paralympics Ireland Performance Plan – 2016 Operational and Investment Plan Overview
15. Paralympics Ireland ‘Road to Rio’ 2016 Performance Plan
16. Paralympics 2016 Overview Operational & Investment
17. Paralympics Ireland Rio 2016 Pre-Games Review Process (required by Sport Ireland prior to the commencement of the Games)
18. Rio 2016 HQ & SSM Team Roles and Responsibilities
19. Para Multi-sports Performance Planning e.g. Powerlifting, Equestrian, Table Tennis, Shooting and Football
20. Para Swimming Road to Rio
21. Para Swimming 2016 – SS & SM programme
22. Para Athletics Road to Rio
23. Para Powerlifting HP Planning template
24. Para Table Tennis HP Planning template
25. Debrief Report response from Paralympics Ireland
26. London 2012 Paralympic Games Debrief – authors Warrington and Fitzpatrick
27. Chef de Mission Report Rio 2016 Paralympic Games
28. Paralympics Ireland Annual Report 2013
29. Paralympics Ireland Annual Report 2014
30. Paralympics Ireland Annual report 2015





# Pentathlon Ireland

Facilitator: Nancy Chillingworth

## Natalya Coyle and Arthur Lanigan-O'Keefe both achieved Top 8 positions at 2016 Olympic Games

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pentathlon Ireland (PI) qualified 2 athletes for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. Both athletes achieved top 10 finishes with Natalya Coyle finishing in 7th position and Arthur Lanigan-O'Keefe in 8th. While 2 top 10 results from a small sport represents a good return on investment for Sport Ireland, it was generally acknowledged that one athlete's result was below expectation despite good performances in three of the disciplines.

Pentathlon is a relatively new sport in Ireland with progression having been made in the performance programme in terms of structures and supports since its establishment in 2009. A revised formal athlete talent pathway has been developed and but has yet to be approved by the Board pending the conclusion and outcome of the Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne (UIPM) Congress in November. Clarity around this and more formalised links with Pony Club would benefit the sport from a performance development perspective.

Pentathlon Ireland is not currently recognised as a National Governing Body (NGB). The sport is currently governed by the Board of Pentathlon Ireland who is affiliated to Horse Sport Ireland (HSI). Sport Ireland invests in pentathlon on a high performance basis and investment is channelled through HSI.

In order to build on the success of the current programme, PI needs to review its governance framework to best serve the high performance needs of the sport. The model of Performance Director with discipline specific coaches should be maintained with additional resource allocated to fencing coaching.

## INTRODUCTION

As part of its Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic review, Sport Ireland commissioned individual reviews into each of the participating sports. A panel of approved facilitators was appointed by Sport Ireland and NGBs could select from that list. The final report was issued to the Board of the NGB prior to being submitted to Sport Ireland for inclusion in the overall Rio 2016 Review.

## METHODOLOGY

The review methodology was devised by Sport Ireland and advised to Jim Bailey, Chairperson, Pentathlon Ireland (PI). It included the following:

- Confidential on-line surveys were completed by members of the Pentathlon team (including people who had an important role in the preparation for the Games but were not in Rio) as part of a wider Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Review. The survey was run from the 16th – 26th September 2016. There were four separate surveys for
  - Athletes
  - Coaching/Support Staff
  - Performance Director (PD)
  - CEO/Board Members

In Pentathlon the surveys were issued to 2 athletes, 12 coaching/support staff, 1 Performance Director (PD) and 1 CEO/board members. There was a relatively good rate of response from 2 athletes, 7 coaching/support staff, 1 PD and 1 Board member. A report detailing summary group data, qualitative analysis and indicating outliers was compiled from the survey and made available to the facilitator for further analysis.

- The online surveys for athletes, coaching /support staff and PDs focused on a number of key areas relating to preparation and readiness, performance and Games experience. The survey for the CEO/Board Members focused on governance and oversight of the High Performance (HP) programme. The focus elements in the athlete and staff surveys included:

1. Support elements in the year leading into the Games
2. Support from relevant organisations in the year leading into the Games
3. Daily training programme
4. Performance programme effectiveness
5. Games readiness
6. Athlete performance
7. Coaching performance
8. Support team performance
9. Games organisation & logistics
10. Games experience and Post-Games experience

- Based on the surveys, a number of common themes were identified which served as the basis for the interviews which were subsequently held. Given the timeline and the numbers involved, a decision was made to interview everyone individually rather than holding focus groups. Everyone who had been issued the survey was given the option for an interview at a time of their choosing. In addition to this a number of additional people were identified by PI for inclusion. As a result, interviews were conducted either on a one-to-one basis or via phone with 2 athletes, 6 coaching/support staff, the PD, and 2 Board Members. Interviews were held between the 7th – 22nd November.
- In addition to this, interviews were held with key stakeholders such as Sport Ireland, the Sport Ireland Institute and the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI)
- The issues, findings and recommendations in this report are based exclusively on the information received during the process through
  - Confidential online survey
  - Interviews with key PI personnel – athletes, coaches, service providers, PD and Board members
  - Interviews with key stakeholders.

| Athlete                | Event                                  | Result |
|------------------------|--|--------|
| Natalya Coyle          | Modern Pentathlon – Women’s Individual | 7th    |
| Arthur Lanigan-O’Keefe | Modern Pentathlon - Men’s Individual   | 8th    |

The target for Pentathlon Ireland was to qualify two athletes for Rio 2016 and this was achieved. Both athletes, however, had very different qualification routes. Arthur qualified early through winning the European Championships in 2015, allowing him to focus on preparation. Natalya on the other hand, experienced a qualification route that required her to chase the available sport, not securing it until June 2016

Two top 10 finishes for PI is an impressive return on what is a small programme operating within a restrictive budget with limited resources. It was the second Games for both athletes with both improving on their London 2012 placings. Natalya's late qualification did not affect her performance and she exceeded expectations by improving her final placing by 2 positions and giving a performance which was higher than those achieved during the lead in to the Games. It is generally acknowledged that Arthur underperformed on the fencing and swimming rounds but made a significant comeback on the following three rounds of the competition. It is acknowledged that there was some frustration that he was outside the medal positions, given his form entering the competition. This frustration is reflective of how far Arthur has come over the course of the cycle, given that he improved from 25th place in London to 8th in Rio. Over the five rounds, the margins are so small that two more hits in fencing would have placed him in the medals. Both athletes had extremely impressive showjumping rounds being among very few who recorded a clear round with no time penalties.

There was consensus among athletes and staff that the athletes were well prepared and 'ready' for the Games although there is some suggestion that one athlete would have benefitted from better engagement with sport psychology. Both had prior experience, having competed in London which added to their sense of readiness. The holding camp in Uberlandia was a success. The sport had initially planned to base themselves in Curitiba with other modern pentathlon teams but a decision was made that it would be more beneficial to the athletes to be a part of a wider Irish team set up. Both athletes believe that this was the correct decision and were very happy with the

support they received in camp. As the decision was made relatively late, the financial cost to Pentathlon Ireland was high in terms of arranging for training partners and coaches to travel to Uberlandia.

Both athletes agreed that decisions around when to enter the village were correct and felt that their rooming arrangements were fine, although one athlete did feel that it may have been more beneficial to have been roomed with athletes who were still in competition mode. The athletes were well supported within their own sport support team at Games time. The inclusion of Giles Warrington as additional support at the Games was highlighted as a positive addition. This was the second Games where the Team Manager / Performance Director was at the Olympics for the first time and in both cases, additional support was required from someone outside Pentathlon who was accredited in a different role. Prior to the Games, lack of communication from the PD was highlighted as an issue by a number of people and it would appear that the strain of a first Olympics coupled with little support from PI was a factor in this. The inclusion of the riding coach as part of the Rio support team was recognised as having a positive performance impact by the athletes but, with a small accredited support team it is important to ensure that there are dual or multiple roles considered within the role specs of those on the team. This would indicate that PI should undertake a comprehensive needs analysis of their team at the Games and take a closer look at either their accreditations or the role specs assigned to those who are part of the accredited team to ensure that all necessary roles are covered. Obviously this could be a challenge for a sport with little experience (outside the athletes) of an Olympic Games but advice on the requirements could be sought from stakeholders with more experience. Both athletes had a positive overall Games experience. They had plans for their post Games period and are well supported in the Sport Ireland Institute. There is the sense that the Sport Ireland Institute staff team is very well attuned to their individual needs and the athletes are confident that any potential issues will be picked up given the amount of time they spend in the Sport Ireland Institute.

## PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Modern pentathlon is still a relatively young sport in Ireland, having only begun a programme three years out from London 2012. The current PD took over the programme in August 2014 initially to cover maternity leave of the previous PD. Following her decision to resign, he continued to lead the programme for the rest of the cycle.

This is the second time that a PD has lead the programme without prior PD experience and it is generally recognised that he has done a good job, notwithstanding some administrative and communication issues on his behalf. This is a challenging role to take on in an organisation with little performance expertise and the PD acknowledged that he relied on Sport Ireland and the Sport Ireland Institute for mentorship. He continued with improvements in the structures and supports that had been given a foundation in the previous cycle and there is now a strong set up for the senior athletes. As the numbers at the top level are so small, it has been possible to have very individualised programmes where necessary. Despite some dips in performance throughout the cycle there was evidence of a more consistent level of performance with strong mixed relay performances and a gold medal at the men's European Championships in 2015.

Coaching is currently undertaken by discipline specific coaches under the management of the PD. The costs involved in operating the programme are high and there is evidence that decisions on coaching were restricted by lack of necessary funds. Reports of coaching were positive in the main. Swimming coaching is supported through the NAC swim club with additional modern pentathlon squad coaching on a voluntary basis from the swimming coach. There were some challenges with coach consideration of other disciplines and the athletics coach was changed with the current coach entering the programme in early 2016 and being positively received by the athletes. Athletes considered the inclusion of their riding coach as part of the Rio support team extremely beneficial. The two areas that need to be considered for additional support are shooting and fencing. The shooting coach

only had about 20 hours contact with the athletes over 2 years. Both athletes had a good foundation in shooting so his role was predominantly maintenance but this is not an effective set up for the progression of the programme. Fencing was also an area both athletes identified as needing increased coaching. This is impacted by the lack of suitable training partners which means more contact time with the coach is required. Fencing coaching was conducted during the cycle but contact time was limited due to budgetary restrictions. While his fencing performance at the Games was clearly a disappointment for Arthur, it is important not to automatically assume that this is the area where all resource needs to be focused. His performances over the course of the cycle, and particularly in 2015, indicate that it is Arthur's ability to deliver the performance he is capable of, rather than his ability to fence, that is a difficulty.

In a programme like modern pentathlon, with a small budget to spread across five disciplines, there is a danger of focusing all resources on the one area that was perceived as underperforming leaving inadequate resources for other elements. This can result in a cyclical situation which chases the weakest performance and as a result inadequately considers the balance of the disciplines. Both athletes and staff consider that the most effective set up is the current one with a PD who understands the sport as a whole and then discipline specific coaches beneath him/her. The challenge for the sport in Ireland is that the available budget does not allow for effective resourcing of coaching across the five disciplines.

Having a national base for modern pentathlon on the National Sports Campus has been a significant improvement meaning that the athletes can train, access service providers and meet with their PD at the one location. Support services are provided through the Sport Ireland Institute and both athletes feel very well supported there. A principle of the programme is to have a centralised multi-disciplinary support team of coaches and service providers. This was set up in such a way that the PD was the central point of contact as they were the

person with oversight of the entire programme. This worked to a certain extent but challenges with communication arose when the PD was away for long periods of time at competition and the administration side of things fell down. As the programme evolved there was more linking of service providers directly with the discipline specific coaches and there is evidence of this working well in pockets but not as an overall integrated system. For the future there probably needs to be more structure around the system and lines of communication. It is evident that there are very effective, committed individuals working within the programme and it is just the dynamics of them working as a successful team that needs to be consolidated.

Over the course of the cycle, the PD adopted a system of review with the athletes that involved more formalised 6 monthly reviews paired with informal post competition debriefs. The intention had been for the support team of coaches and service providers to meet every 8-12 weeks to review the programme as a whole and to discuss its operation from a round table perspective. However, it is acknowledged that this did not always happen due to members' workloads and travel commitments. A meeting has been held since the Games to schedule these more formally for the coming year.

At present, work is being finalised on a clear athlete pathway for modern pentathlon in Ireland. The PD has developed a Talented Athlete Pathway with clear performance markers and expectations. This has yet to be approved by the Board and will be addressed following the conclusion of the UIPM Congress in November. Realistically, modern pentathlon will always be a small sport in Ireland so it is vitally important that there is a clear system for identifying potential talent and nurturing it. The London Debrief (2012) recommended formalised links with Pony Club to identify a pathway for tetrathlon athletes into modern pentathlon and that would appear to be natural fit. There is a strong relationship between PI and Pony Club and the next stage of this is to formalise the relationship between the organisations with an athlete talent pathway including KPIs around the transition piece. One area identified is the length of

time that it takes to develop an elite level of fencing. Pony Club already has a strong network of clubs and coaches and formalised links could potentially enable PI to run fencing sessions (through their development coach) at some events and to effectively promote modern pentathlon as a natural progression for tetrathlon athletes with the potential to become elite senior athletes. PI now has a formalised arrangement with Fencing Ireland which involves the employment of a development level fencing coach who coaches at the National Sports Campus. This model appears to be successful and the possibilities of a similar shared arrangement could be considered at an elite level in the future as Fencing Ireland progresses its own programmes.

## MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

Currently Pentathlon Ireland is set up as an affiliate of Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) as it is not recognised as an NGB in its own right by Sport Ireland. This means that it is not in receipt of core funding although it did receive some additional support from Sport Ireland to run the office during the Rio cycle. The relationship with HSI would appear to be nominal with all governance and strategic decisions made by the Board of PI. The PD is the only staff member and he reports directly to the Chairperson of PI.

As a small sport, the Board of PI was established by a group of people (predominantly parents of athletes) with the desire to see their sport develop. There is evidence that they have been effective in this through promoting the sport within Ireland and increasing membership numbers. The Board have also successfully run a number of events including the World Youth A Championships in 2016. The current Board is overall supportive of the High Performance programme but the programme has evolved at a faster rate than the level of performance expertise within the Board. Additionally, there appears to be a perception within the Board that there is no real need for the Board to understand high performance as its mission is "Sport For Life". Given that the sport is funded solely on the basis of a HP programme, this would indicate a lack of alignment between the aims of the

Board, the HP programme and Sport Ireland as the investor. It could be suggested that the success and potential of the HP programme has outgrown the current model of governance.

NGB recognition does not appear to be a realistic proposition in the near future. Therefore, PI needs to look at how its governance structures support a high performance agenda. HSI currently has a framework of high performance where each discipline is governed by a HP Committee which sits under an overarching strategic committee. Each affiliate is represented on the HP Committee for that discipline. There is a natural fit within this framework for high performance modern pentathlon. A HP Pentathlon Committee could be established with representation from PI enabling the sport to benefit from the HP expertise within HSI and providing a performance oversight of the programme and the budget. PI, as an affiliate, would still be in a position to focus on developing the sport at a participatory level and working towards the governance requirements for NGB recognition at which point it could resume full governance of the HP programme.

The current management of the programme is working and should be continued with a PD and discipline specific coaches. It is essential that the PD has a strong understanding of the sport in order to oversee the programme, manage training workloads, communication, and operation of the system. It is accepted that there are financial considerations, but in order for the programme to progress, actions should be taken to secure the current coaches and recruit a fencing coach for the support team. If the PD is to be the person who travels with the team, a communication and administration strategy should be put in place to ensure continuity during busy competitive periods.

Investment is a challenge for a sport like modern pentathlon where the costs involved in competing and training in a multi-discipline sport are particularly high and investment is on the basis of a senior HP programme only. Investment from Sport Ireland did increase over the cycle but there remains a significant gap between what is received and

what is required to operate the programme. Without an additional revenue stream, annual investment can hamper planning and clever booking of camps and competitions to reduce costs as there is no cash flow. In addition, it is difficult to see how an effective talent pathway can be established to build on the current success at the top level of the sport without additional investment in it. Athletes within modern pentathlon are required to contribute significantly more than they receive through the Carding Scheme to the programme. Effective management of the HP budget is essential and PI should ensure that there is sufficient oversight of its administration. There was some comment concerning management of the budget in the year preceding the Games. With such limited financial resource it is essential that PI operates with financial rigour to avoid additional financial pressure being put on athletes.

## STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Pentathlon Ireland has relationships with a number of stakeholders on varying levels. Annual plans are submitted to Sport Ireland through HSI and HSI then acts as a conduit for the investment but without any involvement from a governance or oversight perspective. In order to continue to progress the high performance modern pentathlon programme and to formalise links with Pony Club and Tetrathlon, it would be beneficial for HSI to take more responsibility of HP governance.

Relationships with Sport Ireland and the Sport Ireland Institute are mainly conducted through the Performance Director and are for the most part positive. The PD found both organisations very beneficial from a support and mentoring perspective. The Sport Ireland Institute currently provides a significant amount of support to the two senior athletes but is reluctant to engage on a more systemic basis until the Board of PI demonstrates clear high performance governance and approves a talent pathway with clarity around performance markers.

As with the previous cycle, the OCI provided some investment to PI to assist with their

preparations for the Olympic Games. Both organisations cited some communication issues in the lead in to the Games, particularly concerning the camp in Uberlandia and some issues around kit provision.

## SUMMARY

In summary, PI has continued to progress its performance programme resulting in a successful outcome at the Games. In order for this success to continue, it needs to review its governance of high performance to ensure that there is a thorough understanding of high performance at Board level and that the PD is adequately supported in their role. Additional investment is required from Sport Ireland if modern pentathlon is to develop its talent pathways and build on the success of the senior athletes.

## PENTATHLON RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review the governance structure for high performance. Until such a time as PI meets the criteria to become a recognised NGB it should consider one of the following options:
  - HSI to take a more active role in governance and move to establish a high performance committee for modern pentathlon within its existing framework.
  - Sport Ireland/Sport Ireland Institute assume governance of the high performance athletes with PD reporting directly to them and PI to focus on the development of the participation element of the sport.
2. Retain the PD model and strengthen the coaching team through the appointment of a world class fencing coach and increasing the amount of shooting coaching.
3. Establish a framework that supports the PD through:
  - Mentoring to ensure continuity for the programme.
  - Communication and administrative support plan at particular stress points and periods spent out of the country.
  - Budgetary oversight and financial rigour.
4. For Tokyo 2020 review support needs of the team at Games time and design role specs ensuring that all needs are met.
5. Continue with the multi-disciplinary support team and formalise communication framework and operating procedures for the team focusing on establishing a fully integrated system.
6. Continue relationship with Fencing Ireland at a shared development coaching level and look to increase this to world class level when and if appropriate.
7. Through HSI, formalise links with Pony Club and tetrathlon in line with a clear athlete talent pathway.

### Non Pentathlon specific recommendations:

1. Sport Ireland to consider greater investment in pentathlon pending satisfaction with its governance framework.



SPORT  
IRELAND





# Rowing Ireland

Dr Katherine Bond and Dr Chris Shambrook

## Paul O'Donovan and Gary O'Donovan won Ireland's first ever Olympic medal in Rowing

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Rio performance and results met or exceeded expectation because of:
  - Exceptional group of athletes with high commitment to succeed, who took responsibility for their own progression, learning and development, and who maximised the resource and expertise available to them.
  - Excellence of coaching expertise and practice, supported by pockets of excellence in sport science and medicine support allowed for a highly effective, very focused performance support.
  - An exceptional 6-9 month pre-Rio preparation programme that was characterised by (near) world class training and competition opportunities, staff support and athlete commitment, building effectively on the momentum that was built through the Olympic cycle.
2. There were on-going issues throughout the cycle with the relationships between the Performance Director and Head Coach, primarily a result of non-agreement on how they delivered their expertise to best effect for the programme. This had an adverse effect on the culture and environment. There were also implications on the practical support provided particularly at competition as well as athlete trust and confidence in the programme or how best to work within the programme. Ironically these challenges probably developed the athlete independence and resourcefulness that helped contribute to the success in Rio.
3. A lack of development structure and pathway is preventing the identification and progression of rowers to international level and is limiting the repeatability of the Rio success and therefore the long term development and sustainability of the sport.
4. We recommend significantly increased role clarity, role acceptance and role performance, shared responsibility for success by collaborating between those roles, and a commitment from all to create a sustainable world class programme and culture for the programme that builds up to and delivers in Tokyo 2020.
5. The current situation of recent history and success within this Olympic cycle represents a very strong position to be in. The strength of the position comes from the opportunity to add great value to what has been delivered by working hard on some human factors that cost nothing other than time and a shared desire to work in a truly collaborative manner.

## PROCESS OF COMPILING THE REPORT

Interviews took place between the dates of October 12th and October 18th 2016. 4 interviews completed by Skype and 6 face to face interviews in Dublin. Dr Bond carried out all but one of the interviews.

Interviews were recorded so that points of value could be re-listened to and accuracy of statements made in the report guaranteed. Notes were also taken during the interviews to capture immediate points of relevance against the key themes being explored, with guidance for the interview themes coming predominantly from the Sport Ireland recommendations.

The interviews lasted between 40 and 75 minutes and everyone interviewed was reassured of confidentiality before and after the interviews were carried out.

We had briefly looked at the survey results prior to the interviews, but hadn't gone into them in too much detail so that we weren't swayed by their contents. We wanted to give the interview information the same weight of influence in the final report collation and wanted to avoid simply validating what people might have already offered via the online survey.

We had discussions about the interviews at various stages through the information collection process to begin building an understanding of the details being shared and how themes were emerging, as well as specific points of interest. The discussions along the way between us helped to ensure we were understanding the unique context of Rowing Ireland, as well as being able to position this against our detailed experience of Olympic, Paralympic, Professional Sport and Commercial high performance environments.

After completing all of the interviews, we spent a final day working together to bring the report into a format that allowed the voices of the participants to be heard in a way that provided useful guidance and choice points for Rowing Ireland as they enter the next Olympiad. We have not included verbatim quotes due to the small number of people interviewed

and the strong desire voiced by everyone for confidentiality. Any direct quotes would be easily attributable to specific individuals, so we have generated feedback themes and used them within the report.

## ASSESSMENT OF THE INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE

In our professional view, everyone interviewed was committed to sharing their personal views honestly and with a desire to promote further development and learning for Rowing Ireland.

It was clear that all participants needed reassurance that the interview contents were going to be being treated with confidentiality. This shared need for reassurance is an interesting observation in its own right and one that points to some of the opportunities for the next Olympiad. We will comment more on this later.

It was also clear that everyone was able to answer clearly from their own personal perspective and had their own views and experiences to help provide answers and context. Also, the crews interviewed had similar experiences within their crews. However, there was not a sense that answers were being provided against a shared set of Rowing Ireland objectives and strategies that everyone was taking personal responsibility for delivering. Therefore, the interviews and nature of responses also point to the nature of the culture in place at the time leading up to the Olympic Games and this also provides useful considerations for development.

We would like to specifically thank all of the participants for their time and efforts to support the review process and despite there being some concerns over the sensitivity of views being shared, everyone took the chance to have their views heard really well. We now aim to pay back that trust by producing a report that draws on that information to present a practical and detailed set of recommendations for building to Tokyo and beyond.

The success achieved by qualifying 3 boats for gaining one medal and two Olympic finalist

places is an excellent step forward. The combination of athletes and coaches allowed a great set of results to be achieved and having the opportunity to identify the contributory factors and opportunities for continued success has been at the forefront of our minds when reflecting on all of the information shared.

### HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME - STRUCTURE, SYSTEMS, PROCESSES

- The PD started in role at the end of 2012. At this point he inherited a programme which produced 1 qualified boat for London 2012 Olympics. As a result of the London performance budget cuts of 25% took place and there was a high staff transition, particularly on the coaching front. There was little structured activity and support in place (training camps, programme, etc.) and for the 6-9 month period post-London. As a result, a focus was placed on connecting with clubs, coaches and the identification of talent for Rio cycle.
- The Head Coach started in May 2013. For the most part, he operated as the sole coach throughout the cycle at the National Training Centre. Mary McLachlan provided input for a period as assistant coach. The programme focused on 16-18 athletes in the training squad, with reduction in numbers in pre-Rio period (once qualification had taken place and selection had been confirmed).
- It seems that there was a lack of clearly and/or consistently articulated programme objectives, strategy and plan during the cycle, apart from the objective to qualify one boat for Rio. All individuals interviewed felt that while there was clarity of training structure on a daily basis, the programme vision, strategy and plan was missing throughout the cycle. The absence of the overriding strategy and application of it resulted in the next three items potentially detracting from the overall togetherness within the team.
- Regular review processes for athletes and staff were poorly used and followed at best. There was day-to-day discussion to review

progress between athletes and coaches, but periodic review processes were neither consistently adhered to or considered valuable by athletes or staff, so there was no formal bringing together of the day-to-day progress being made.

- Selection policy and process - most individuals felt that while there may have been a policy (and were, to greater and lesser extents aware of that policy and how to access it), the policy was not followed. This lack of perceived equity and transparency may have led to a breakdown in trust and faith in the programme and coaching/management team.
- Until selection for Rio took place, there was a perception shared by many (rowers and staff) that there was investment in taking crews who were not at international level, and who had little potential to be, away to competition. This was perceived to be a waste of resource - financially and in investment of staff time.

### SPORT SCIENCE AND MEDICINE

- Sport Science Support was not widely available, and there appeared to be an initial lack of clarity amongst athlete around available support, and eligibility and processes of accessing support. Sport science and medicine support appeared to be more reactively than proactively used by athletes, i.e., it tended to be accessed to address an issue rather than to build on strengths or develop competition readiness. While athletes generally reported that they got 'enough' access to sport science, there may be a lack of understanding about the role or 'value add' of sport science and medicine support amongst athletes and coaching staff.
- Physiology support was most accessed and valued, with particular impact being achieved by the Physiologist with the LW2x in the lead up to Rio. The effectiveness of the input seemed to result from the combination of an experienced practitioner and athletes/coach who were able to seek

out the specific value of the expertise being offered. Rather than an on-going service of supporting training, the input seems to be more like a consultancy model, so any recommendations being made will be in the absence of comprehensive baseline data. Nutrition support was also mentioned as particularly valuable when it was available and this was particularly so when focused on very practical support being delivered through the provision of advice to the hotel in Banyoles for the pre-Olympic training camp.

- Physiotherapy support was available in Cork for the athletes and support was perceived as effective when available. The method of provision was geared primarily towards injury management when required and the amount of provision available meant on-going maintenance work or training aftercare was not available. Provision on training camps was not always consistent and on occasion athletes were left to make their own arrangements when away. Although the level of provision didn't lead to specific problems, with the potential for bigger squads in the future and new athletes coming into full-time training programmes, it will be important to consider how best to support these athletes with physiotherapy maintenance work, as well as speedy access when acute needs arise.
- The Rio specific preparation support provided by Sport Ireland was well received and there is an opportunity for future Olympics for Rowing Ireland to put in place it's own programme of Olympic Readiness, both for qualification as well as successfully qualified athletes. Similarly, support from Sport Ireland for staff was deemed to be useful and of high quality.

## COACHING

- The majority of rowers were coached by the Head Coach at the National Training Centre in Cork, with the LM2X being coached predominantly by their club-based coach in Skibbereen. In the 12-month lead in to Rio, the LM2X coach was a contracted coach,

with responsibility for supporting the crew through to Rio. There was an expectation that he would provide plans and progress reports as part of that, which generally he failed to do.

- Training sessions at the NTC were perceived as high quality - structured, appropriate in intensity and volume, and with good technical input.
- Given the number of rowers in the training environment, coaching resource at times was stretched. In the 6-9 months prior to Rio, coaching resource focused more on selected crews. This resulted in other crews using the NTC not always receiving high quality support or input.
- Both coaches of the selected Rio rowers worked well with their crews - from the comments made by athletes there was a high degree of trust, role clarity and confidence between coaches and athletes.
- The Performance Director made coaching and programme input to all crews involved. In the case of the LM2X, he acted as a sounding board and advisor to the programme planning process in the 12 month build up to Rio, and his input was highly valued by the coach and rowers. He inputted less constructively to the women's crews and there appeared to be times where he openly gave advice on the programme and specific sessions to the rowers and coach that conflicted with the head coach's philosophy and programme content. This led to a degree of tension in the environment, and for rowers, a lack of clarity about the roles of the PD/HC and how they could add value together.
- The CEO sought to create greater collaboration in coaching and programme decisions in the build up to Rio, motivated by a desire to resolve the deteriorating relationship between the PD and HC, and also to gain assurance that the LM2X crew were on track for Rio. The need for this intervention is an important indication of the level of impact the PD/HC relationship challenges was having.

## TEAM MANAGEMENT, LOGISTICS AND COMMUNICATION

This was an area that many felt was below world class standard, and something which had significantly deteriorated in the Rio cycle. Basic administrative and management processes, such as booking of flights, transport while on camps/at competition, identification of sport medicine providers, provision of fit for purpose equipment, were inadequate or simply not attended to. On occasions rowers resorted to doing these administrative tasks themselves, and their trust that the PD (who was in the team leader role) was taking care of these things was eroded over the cycle. While this developed independence in rowers, it added undue stress and burden, and did not help them being fully focused on their readiness to compete.

## CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

- The training facilities at the NTC were rated highly by all interviewed - rowers and staff felt that the environment was world class standard.
- The relationship between the PD and HC became increasingly strained through the cycle. At the root of this appeared to be divergent views on coaching, athlete preparation and the focus on programme resource. A possible lack of role clarity for both and poor communication between the two key programme leads exacerbated the issue. Over the course of the cycle, and in particular in the 18-24 build up to Rio, there were some instances of open disagreement between PD and HC in the training environment which led to rowers feeling uncomfortable and for some, feeling like they needed to 'take sides' in the conflict. The word 'toxic' was used by rowers and staff alike in describing the environment over much of the cycle. Although good results have still been achieved, the experience of getting to Rio appears to have been a highly challenging one all round. The environment ultimately didn't compromise the results, but there is still a question of how much additional energy was required by

everyone to manage their performances in such an environment and therefore whether even better results might have been achievable.

As mentioned in the introduction, everyone was seeking assurances of confidentiality when interviews began and finished. This in itself indicates that everyone wants to be able to change the current situation, but isn't necessarily willing to begin the robust, honest and challenging conversations that will need to happen in order to ensure the situation is not repeated. The shared desire for confidentiality also reflects the level of mistrust that has been created by being present in the current culture and no single individual seeing it as their responsibility or right to begin the process of change.

- Athlete resourcefulness, independence and experience was key to the success achieved in Rio. From the interviews, our overall impression is of a group of athletes who were highly self-motivated, resourceful in getting the support that they needed, took charge of their own preparation for Rio (with guidance and support from the team around them) when required of them, made excellent performance choices in the immediate build up to Rio, and remained focused on execution of their plan in Rio.

## RIO PREPARATION

The programme structure and content of 6-9 months lead in to Rio were reported to us in a way that shows it to have been effective in maximising crew readiness for the Games. There were several key contributing factors to this:

- Overseas camps - having the opportunity to train in good conditions away from distractions at home for lengthy periods of time during the 2015-16 winter period worked very well.
- Physiological input - testing and occasional monitoring allowed important sense checking to take place, reaffirm training progress and even refine pre-race

preparation tactics. The monitoring and testing led to increased confidence in the programme and trust in the coaching team.

- The pre-Rio camp - this was identified by all as pivotal in maximising readiness for Rio. The camp provided an opportunity to do final preparation, with support of coaches and sport science/medicine staff, away from the growing interest from media and public at home ahead of the Games.
- The competition schedule ahead of Rio was effective in giving crews the right amount of competitive opportunities going into the Games. Importantly, the right balance was struck between training, travelling and competition.
- The Rio prep camps and competition attendance also gave the team the opportunity to practice logistics, test plans and spend time as a team. It meant that at the Games, things felt simple and well-practiced logistically and operationally. Even though there was a sense that the organisation and management by the staff team was not at World Class level, athletes knew what they needed to do to get themselves prepared and ready (including logistically) to compete.

A few things could have been improved on:

- having less than 24 hours at home on arrival back from Spain because of the need to attend a sponsors' lunch in Dublin ahead of flying out to Rio - most people mentioned this as less than ideal preparation. This was accompanied by some very early mornings to train and prepare to travel, so at a key time, the quality of the training camp preparation was not maintained in this key transition period.
- Better contingency planning for injuries. Several people mentioned the lack of involvement/integration of spares in training, which they felt meant that the team were vulnerable in case of injury/illness.

- There was a delay in boats arriving back in Ireland from the final TC in Spain, resulting in crews having to use older, lower quality boats for their last training session ahead of going to Rio, which although managed well, was a potential interruption of momentum at an important point.

## RIO PERFORMANCE

- There was consensus that the team performed to their potential in Rio, and in most cases their results met or exceeded those expected. Looking at the progress from the previous World Championships, there is evidence of a strong final 12 months.
- Entry into the village was 8 days before competition start, which the majority thought was the right length of time pre-competition. Most felt that it took 5 days to recover and get acclimated, meaning the timing of peaking for the start of competition was good.
- The team functioned as required in Rio, with the lead coach supporting the female crews and Dominic and (generally) the PD supporting the mens LM2X. There were some issues with phone communications in Rio, meaning that on occasions crews were not informed of logistic arrangements or changes. For the most part, rowers got on with taking responsibility to organise their own transport and on occasions made decisions about their schedule.
- The mood in the team was generally described as task focused and operational. Previous conflict between PD and HC was less evident as they operated fairly independently with men's and women's crews.
- The Irish team environment in the village was generally good, although several interviewed commented that there could have been some more social events put on. There was some 'noise' in the Irish camp around the ticketing and drugs scandals, but this did not unduly affect the rowing team.

## DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE

At present, a development structure and system appears to be lacking. There is an absence of a structured talent identification process that involves clubs and universities, and while there are pockets of excellence in clubs, an established and formalised club based development structure, leading to national development camps is yet to be set up. National development camps appear to be sporadic and the progression through to national squad is not operating as well as it can. This was acknowledged by the majority of those interviewed.

Coach development is another area that would benefit from attention and investment. Coaches from clubs were generally not used or present at development camps/at the NTC.

It must be highlighted that limited people resource and severely limited financial resources make it extremely challenging to put in place a development pathway for athletes and coaches, but there is opportunity to build on this for the Tokyo cycle and beyond. Having a long-term objective of creating a foundation for the identification and development of talent throughout the country is recommended.

## GOVERNANCE AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Although there was limited information gathered in interviews on governance and investment strategy, it appeared that there was a clear high-level performance strategy. The PD, supported by CEO was responsible for developing and implementing this. This informed investment decisions made throughout the cycle. However, athletes and staff (other than the PD and to an extent the HC), were not aware of the programme vision and plan. While it is not necessarily expected that they would be aware of the strategic plan, it would be expected that athletes would have greater awareness of the programme progression and direction of travel.

There was a degree of lack of clarity over the Board's role in decision-making around the high performance programme. Athletes

perceived that the Board were involved to a degree in making decisions and questioned this involvement (and their fitness to be involved). This was echoed by some staff who felt that the Board involvement complicated and delayed the decision making process.

## AREAS TO ADDRESS TO PREVENT ONGOING INTERFERENCE WITH PERFORMANCE

Reflecting back on the post London period and the success of the Rio Olympics, it's important to ensure that there is an ongoing training programme during the post-Rio period (2016-17) and provide as much coaching and support as possible within current resource base. With the opportunity to clearly articulate the forward plan to the rowers this period become very important in maximising on-going momentum and motivation for those that are continuing as well as for those who have the opportunity to become part of the next Olympic cycle. Beyond the current focus, having the training camp, selection and competition programme always laid out 18 months in advance, regardless of date relative to the Olympics, would ensure that everyone knows the opportunities and expectations ahead for maintaining the entire programme. With fixed dates for trials, ergo tests and competitions, this also lays the foundation for the selection process to be an important part of the annual calendar.

Team management. There is a clear need for performance focused decisions around logistics and operations. A designated team manager to organise the practicalities of all training camps and competition trips, and to manage the team when away from training at the NTC is essential for the Tokyo cycle. Although athletes stepped up and organised for themselves when needed, it would not be appropriate to rely on the same level of athletes autonomy and independence with future performers. There is a lot to be said for athletes being given autonomy within a highly effective structure, but this is very different from athletes feeling they have to take charge to compensate for elements of preparation not being in place they would expect to be taken care of.

## ESSENTIAL PROGRAMME ACTIONS

With a successful Rio Olympic Games, there is a great opportunity to think very clearly about the 2020/2024 Mission that everyone will be involved in working towards. With a clear and simple mission in place there is an opportunity to use this as a focus for communication, decision making, strategic decisions, as well as this giving each individual within the set up the chance to consider their opportunity and responsibility in working towards this mission. With the numbers of people involved in the programme as a whole, as well as the opportunity to be bringing new talent through to the Olympic programme, a simple and powerful mission that becomes a highly consistent and visible element of the environment, will put in place a foundation for learning and development that isn't currently in place.

Once a clear mission is in place the opportunity to become world class at Role Clarity within the sport is created. Creating Role Clarity from Board Level through every individual within Rowing Ireland is an essential aim to achieve. Each individual will benefit enormously in their own confidence levels, as well as their capacity for working collaboratively with everyone else towards the mission when all roles are clearly established. Role Clarity then opens up the opportunity for all individuals to formally accept that they have the desire and ability to play those roles. Without formal Role Acceptance, and a regular focus on how well roles are combining, there is always a risk of relationship breakdown. With Role Acceptance in place however, it ensures that everyone then considers where there is separate and shared responsibilities between roles for delivering the steps towards the mission. Without a constant drive to work on Role Clarity, Role Acceptance and collective Role Performance, there is little chance that the whole will be greater than the sum of the parts.

Ensure that selection policy and procedures are clearly articulated to all rowers and staff, but in particular then followed. This is important to maintain rower trust and faith in the system and management. Selection in rowing is always a combination of objective measurement

combined with expert judgement. Therefore, where collaboration and trust can be maximised so that everyone is playing their part in contributing to an open and rigorous selection process, negative consequences are minimised. Within a relatively small squad of athletes there is opportunity to work on collaboration and trust far more readily.

Coaching resource appears to be a particularly important area of focus for 2017 and beyond. With returning Olympians wanting to push on and build on their 2016 experiences, it will be important to having coach expertise ready to respond to this challenge, confidently ready to continue in partnership with the athletes. Furthermore, an increased pool of coaches will be important to ensure that key methods and approaches can be confidently shared with all athletes who are part of and aspire to be part of the Rowing Ireland programme. With a fully united team of coaches, being overseen by the PD who is focused on creating the environment within which they can work superbly with the athletes, the chances of building on the success of this Olympiad would be greatly improved.

Greater clarity, collectively, on what excellence looks like. The current cohort of athletes are resourceful, independent and intelligent, and are growing in awareness of what's required to success at world class level, their development in this regard could be accelerated with the support of some external expertise from the Sport Ireland Institute, another sport that exemplifies world class practice or from another national HP rowing programme that functions with similar numbers and investment levels. This is as, or more important, with respect to the development of the next generation of athletes and coaches.

A mission to fully understand what world class looks like also represents an opportunity for Rowing Ireland to position itself as a breeding ground for high performance practitioners. Working with young, ambitious sport scientists, who want to be challenged by a sport to deliver high value support and gain an invaluable development experience within an elite sport environment could be a useful strategy to employ over the coming years.

Targeting Sport Science via a project mentality. There were good reports of high quality impact made from sport science practitioners when there was a specific, practical brief or opportunity. For example, physiology providing targeted advice on how to change warm-ups for performance benefit and nutrition support being targeted towards the provision of menu advice to the hotel in Banyoles. Rowing Ireland could identify further, specific areas for performance gain or high value services and charge the practitioners to primarily deliver value for these 'project' areas. In this way, there

is a specific, proactive brief and a clear way of assessing the extent to which the expert support has been delivered and the value gained. With 2-3 project areas per practitioner, this could also lead to the creation of a sport science 'team' who could support each other in delivery of the overall project objectives.

Clarify and potentially reduce the involvement of the Board's role around high performance. Plans are already in place for a HP sub-committee to support and expedite the decision making process.

## ROWING RECOMMENDATIONS

Without knowing the extent to which funding will change for Rowing Ireland it is difficult to make bold, specific recommendations for the next Olympic cycle and beyond. However, with the Olympic success comes the opportunity to explore commercial partnership funding, as well as being in the position to make a strong case for increased central funding.

The following are a mix of specific recommendations to consider that would require significant funding, but would have important performance impact:

1. Training camps were definitely perceived as highly effective by everyone. The opportunity to train in a specific location and minimal travelling to contend with before being able to refuel and rest is a likely, obvious reason for the quality of work carried out. Additionally, time post-training sessions for discussion/analysis are also not time pressured, so everything allows work/recovery/learning/unity to be enhanced. Given the perceived positive impact of the training camps, great consistency and exploitation of this approach is recommended, with the suggestion that clear training camp objectives are set and evaluated before and after every camp to ensure there is a sense of accountability and a confirmation of value from each block of training. Ensuring these camps are fully supported with physio and medical cover would also maximise the likelihood of impact in the future.
2. Since the training camp impact has been so strong, it would be an important addition to ensure that National Training Camp training is able to benefit from as many of the training camp qualities as possible. A specific way in which this could be achieved is through finding a way to bring high quality nutrition to the NTC, so that immediately after training sessions, athletes are able to refuel with high quality food. This could also serve to keep them being educated about their own food choices, as well as being able to purchase pre-prepared food to take home. Exploring possible commercial relationships with food suppliers and a relationship with a Catering School to set the centre up to develop Chefs would seem like a very practical way forward in this area.
3. Maintaining the training camp theme further, where it is possible to have a training camp at the Tokyo Olympic venue, or a period of time to recce the Olympic venue for the athletes, this would provide an important part of the preparation jigsaw. Timing of this would probably be late 2019, after initial qualification places have been secured. The opportunity

to visit the Olympic venue at the beginning of the final push to the Games provides athletes and coaches with a much clearer understanding of the environment they will be competing in and can help to bring greater clarity to the remainder of the training time available. Even if this is a land based training camp, the time spent would be valuable.

4. There is a need to unite the sport science and medicine provision through a single performance filter. It would seem that purchasing some biomechanics equipment for one or two boats would be a powerful mechanism for achieving this unity. The measurement of on-water movement and application of forces provides a singular, case-conferencing focus for athletes/coaches and practitioners to keep solving the problem of increasing on-water speed. Physio and S&C work can be fully focused on functional movement and ensuring bodies are equipped for and delivering that movement. Physiology data that is collected can be used alongside a fuller on-water picture of performance. Psychological work can be focused towards skill acquisition, development and maintenance and if all of this is being used as a collaborative focus between coach/athlete and practitioners, the nature of support starts from having a united problem to solve and data-set to work with, rather than everyone tackling performance influences they see without a consideration of other areas. The interdisciplinary approach promoted by the on-water data would be a very clear way of ensuring practitioners are truly immersing themselves into the applied challenges of the sport and developing their rowing specific expertise as quickly as possible.
5. On a non-funding related note, we believe that given the success of the Olympics this time around, it is a good time to create an athlete representative role to ensure that there is a regular, formal connection between the athletes and the coaches/PD. Having consistent, regular meetings that focus on proactive communication between athletes and staff would ensure that the joined-up approach we have outlined is being made the most of. Athletes and coaches being able to regularly check-in with how things are going and preparing for what the next phase of training is focused on, will help with building momentum with approaches that are working, as well as being able to identify areas of concern/confusion early and in a collaborative manner. The most important reason for creating an athlete representative is to reinforce that the quest for success is a collaborative effort and not a hierarchical one. Creating an agreed agenda for monthly meetings would help this role work really well and deliver value all round.

**We would once again like to thank everyone for their openness in the interviews and we are looking forward to keeping conversations going beyond the submission of the report and providing as much input as we can to Rowing Ireland over the coming weeks to take advantage of what we have learned and to help shape the implementation of recommendations. We hope we're able to support you in adding the contents of the report to your existing plans to help build on the success of the last Olympic cycle.**

 SPORT  
IRELAND





# Swim Ireland

Facilitator: Brian MacNeice (Kotinos Partners)

## Oliver Dingley became first Irish diver to compete in an Olympic Games final, finishing 8th

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Team Ireland sent 4 athletes to the Rio Games and overall the team performed in line with expectations. The undoubted success of the Games was the qualification of an Irish diver for the Olympic Final. The other 3 athletes performed broadly in line with pre-Games expectations or better, all placing in the top 20 in their target events and one swimmer qualifying for a Semi-Final. Fiona Doyle had been expected to Semi-Final, having achieved the 'A' standard a year before the Games.

Whilst the Rio squad size was small, this forms the basis of a good foundation for future Olympic cycles. The 4 Rio athletes and in particular a strong group within the Emerging Talent Squad suggests that the number of qualifiers and performance levels for Tokyo 2020 will be higher.

The planning and preparation programme for the qualified athletes was well structured and executed. The various pre-Games training camps, competition schedule and the Games holding camp all went smoothly and were a positive factor in enabling the athletes' performance in the Games.

However, the standards across the programme can and should be pushed further. Everyone

within the system should be challenged to identify how to progress the High Performance Programme and take it to the 'next level'. A new High Performance Strategy has been developed and approved by the Board of Swim Ireland to carry into the new cycle. This needs to ensure that the step up required for the programme to 'kick on' is achieved.

There is room for improvement with respect to the Olympic experience for athletes and coaches. The relationship between the Swim Ireland High Performance Team and the OCI Team is strained and it is essential that this is addressed.

A series of recommendations has been identified for consideration and implementation by Swim Ireland. We are confident that if these actions are addressed, some of which are already in train under the new High Performance Strategy, that the programme will be in a stronger place for Tokyo 2020.

We congratulate all of the athletes, coaches and support staff on their achievements in qualifying and competing at the Rio Games. They should be proud of their achievements and look forward to greater achievements from them in the future.

## METHODOLOGY

### Review Scope

Kotinos Partners was commissioned by Swim Ireland (SI) to carry out a review of the Swim Ireland Team's performance at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. The brief for this review was to:

- Provide an independent, evidence-based review report to Swim Ireland on their high performance programme, their preparation for, and performance at the Rio Games;
- Gather and report data and insight based on the review framework provided by Sport Ireland to all National Governing Bodies (NGBs) participating at the Rio Games;
- Make recommendations to Swim Ireland based on all findings and conclusions from the review process.

### Review Process

The key inputs to this review process were:

1. Pre-Games assessment document completed by Swim Ireland and submitted to Sport Ireland in advance of the Rio Games;
2. Post-Games online survey of athletes, coaching/support staff, Performance Director, CEO completed after the Rio Games;
3. Various documents relating to the planning and preparation by Swim Ireland for the Rio Games;
4. One-to-one interviews conducted with key personnel involved in the High Performance cycle from London 2012 to Rio 2016 .

A draft report was submitted to the Swim Ireland CEO, Sarah Keane, on 28th October to facilitate clarification and correction of any factual elements within the report. No corrections were deemed necessary. The findings, conclusions and recommendations were not for review and have remained unchanged from the draft version. This final report was then submitted to Sport Ireland by Swim Ireland.

## RIO 2016 QUALIFICATION AND PERFORMANCE

### Rio 2016 Qualification Process

The High Performance programme set the FINA 'A' Standard as the minimum requirement for Olympic qualification. This is the second Olympic cycle that this standard has been adopted as part of the selection criteria for Irish swimmers. 3 swimmers achieved this standard and were selected for the Rio squad:

- Nicholas Quinn – 200m breaststroke – qualification standard achieved in April 2016 at the Eindhoven Swim Cup with a time of 2:11:24 some 0.42 seconds under the 2:11:66 'A' Standard time;
- Shane Ryan – 100m backstroke – qualification standard achieved in March 2016 at the Swim Ireland Dave McCullagh/Swim Ulster International with a time of 53.93 well inside the 54.36 'A' Standard time;
- Fiona Doyle – 100m breaststroke – qualification standard achieved in July 2015 at the World University Games in South Korea with a time of 1:07:67 in a semi-final (a time she bettered in winning Bronze in the final with a time of 1:07:15). The 'A' Standard time was set at 1:07.85.

The FINA qualification window remained open until July 3rd, however, Swim Ireland set a deadline of May 31st for its swimmers to achieve the qualification standard. This is to ensure that sufficient preparation time is allowed for qualified swimmers to arrive at the Rio Games in peak condition. Therefore, the final qualifying event was set as the European Championships at the end of May in London. Swim Ireland had a team of 12 competing at the European Championships, the largest ever Senior squad competing at an international event. No other swimmer achieved the 'A' Standard qualification time, with 16 year-old Conor Ferguson going closest missing out by 0.05 seconds in the 100m backstroke event.

Ireland had one potential diver attempting to qualify for the Rio Games. Oliver Dingley became eligible to represent Ireland in international competition on the 4th November 2015. As two qualifying events (European Championships in June 2015 and the World Championships in July 2015) had already taken

place, this left one opportunity for qualification at the 2016 World Cup in Rio. To qualify a top 18 (semi-final) finish was required. Oliver placed 15th in the semi-final and thus secured an Olympic qualification place. This was the first time an Irish diver qualified for the Olympic Games since Eddie Herron in the 1948 London Games.

Swim Ireland also sent a Men's 4x100 Medley Team Relay squad to the European Championships in May 2016 in an effort to qualify a relay team for the first time in the history of the nation. The team needed a top 16 world ranking to earn qualification. They qualified for the European Final, finishing in 7th place, however were ranked 19th in the world and missed out for qualification by 3 places. In reality, Swim Ireland were 12 months behind on developing a relay strategy and it only became a possibility when Shane Ryan arrived into the Irish programme. This is an area that should be targeted in the next Olympic cycle.

One swimmer, Chris Bryan, attempted to qualify for the Open Water event at Rio. A top 10 finish was required in the Marathon Swimming Olympic Qualifying Event held in Portugal in June 2016. Chris finished 41st and therefore did not qualify.

### Rio 2016 Performances

The performances of the Irish athletes are summarised in their target events are summarised below:

| Athlete               | Event                | FINA 'A' Standard | Qualification Time Achieved |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Nicholas Quinn</b> | 200m Breaststroke    | 2:11:66           | 2:11:24                     |
| <b>Shane Ryan</b>     | 100 Backstroke       | 54:36             | 53:93                       |
| <b>Fiona Doyle</b>    | 100m Breaststroke    | 1:07:85           | 1:07:15                     |
| <b>Oliver Dingley</b> | Men's 3M Springboard | Top 18 Ranking    | 15th Place Ranking          |

| Athlete               | Event                | Result                                  | Finishing Position | Time Required to Qualify for Semi-Final | Personal Best Finishing Position |
|-----------------------|----------------------|---|--------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| <b>Nicholas Quinn</b> | 200m Breaststroke    | 2:11:67                                 | 19th               | 2:11:26                                 | 16th                             |
| <b>Shane Ryan</b>     | 100 Backstroke       | 53:85 (H)<br>54:40 (SF)                 | 14th               | 53:99 (53:34 for final)                 | 14th                             |
| <b>Fiona Doyle</b>    | 100m Breaststroke    | 1:07:58                                 | 20th               | 1:07:22                                 | 15th                             |
| <b>Oliver Dingley</b> | Men's 3M Springboard | 399.80 (P)<br>414.25 (SF)<br>442.90 (F) | 8th                | 389.90 (P)<br>389.40 (SF)               | 8th                              |

The 3 swimmers competed in other events for which they did not meet the FINA 'A' standard as part of the preparation for their target event.

### **Nicholas Quinn**

Nicholas' target event was the 200m Breaststroke for which he qualified almost half a second below the FINA 'A' Standard. He won his Heat swimming a time of 2:11:67, however this placed him in 19th place and 3 places out of qualification for the Semi-Final. This was below his qualification time achieved of 2:11:24. This qualification time would have been good enough to earn the last Semi-Final slot. In his other event he finished 33rd and below a personal best which if achieved would still not have qualified him for a Semi-Final placing.

### **Shane Ryan**

Shane swam a strong opening heat in his target event of 100m Backstroke. His time of 53.93 was an equal personal best and qualified him for the Semi-Final in 14th place. He finished 8th in his Semi-Final race with a time of 54:40 just over 1 second off the qualifying time for the Final. He also competed in the 50m and 100m Freestyle events ranking 43rd and 40th respectively well outside the qualification time for Semi-Final placings.

### Fiona Doyle

Fiona competed in both the 100m and 200m Breaststroke events with the 100m swim her main target event. Fiona finished 8th in a strong heat and ranked 20th overall with a time of 1:07:58. Her personal best time would have been good enough to earn a 15th place ranking and a place in the Semi-Final. In her other event she ranked 25th and did not qualify for the Semi-Final.

Each of the 3 swimmers swam their fastest Heat times ever at the Games and all achieved either a second-fastest lifetime swim or in the case of Shane Ryan an equal lifetime personal best.

### Oliver Dingley

Oliver adopted a conservative strategy for the Preliminary Round performing a series of low degree difficulty dives. The strategy paid off and his score of 399.80 was on a par with his season average performances (395.16) and was good enough to earn him a place in the Semi-Final with a ranking of 13th place out of the 29 competitors. He increased the difficulty of dive for the Semi-Final and performed well with a score of 414.25 to place 9th overall and earn a place in the Final. He delivered his best performance in the Final with a lifetime personal best score of 442.90 securing 8th place overall. This was an excellent achievement and has earned Oliver a place in the 2017 FINA Diving World Series.

### Rio 2016 Performances vs. Targets

The Pre-Games performance targets set out by the Swim Ireland High Performance Programme were to:

1. Qualify 6 athletes to Rio
2. Reach 2 Semi-Finals
3. Reach 1 Final (top 8 in swimming/top 12 in diving)

The pre-Games target was to qualify 6 athletes. Ireland failed to achieve this target, qualifying 4. One young swimmer, narrowly missed qualification standard and the 4x100m Medley Relay team were 3 ranking positions away from qualification. Whilst the qualification target was not met, the High Performance Team felt that the calibre of athlete selected was improved on previous Olympiads and the athletes were better prepared.

The target of reaching 2 Semi-Finals was met with both Shane Ryan and Oliver Dingley progressing through the Heat stages in their target events. Both athletes achieved Personal Best times/points at Rio. Nicholas Quinn and Fiona Doyle both finished in the top 20th in their main event. All four athletes are well placed to build on these performances and compete for higher placings in Tokyo 2020.

The target of reaching 1 Final was met with the qualification of Oliver Dingley for the Men's 3m Springboard final. This was an outstanding achievement in his first Olympic Games.

### Future Athlete Focus

The squad size for the Rio Games is small, with 4 qualified athletes. In addition, all 4 have spent a considerable proportion of their time outside of the Irish High Performance System. To achieve long-term, sustainable success the High Performance Programme must improve its ability to produce domestically based athletes capable of qualifying for future Olympic Games. In advance of Rio, a new High Performance Strategy was developed to address this and to create a new framework and structures for the High Performance Programme post Rio. The revised framework sets out a vision of a long-term, systemic approach to achieving consistent medal success at Olympic and World level.

The pipeline of future talent within the sport suggests that a deeper pool of potential athletes exists to be developed. The Emerging Talent Squad features a number of swimmers currently ranked within the top 10 in the world for their age group. Additionally, the Senior Squad that competed at the European Championships in London this year was the largest ever sent by Swim Ireland. All 10 swimmers from that squad have indicated their intention to continue swimming. This forms the basis of a strong foundation for the future.

## PREPARATION AND READINESS FOR THE GAMES

### Pre-Games Training - Swimming

All 3 swimmers had qualified for the Rio Games in advance of the last qualification event for Irish swimmers, the European Championships in London. Therefore, they used this event as part of their Rio preparation and this was very useful in providing them with high quality competitive swimming. Both Fiona Doyle and Shane Ryan qualified for finals at this event. Swim Ireland ensured each of the 3 swimmers had their personal coaches in attendance at this event in order to maximise the value of this Championship for each athlete in their preparation for Rio.

Following on from this, a training camp was organised in Calella in Spain. Again this proved to be a useful camp with coaching staff and swimmers alike rating it highly in terms of their preparation programme. At the end of this camp, the swimmers competed in an event in Barcelona in which they all swam well. The swimmers returned home and continued their preparation under their home coaches before departing for the holding camp for Rio in Uberlandia at the end of July.

The team had the opportunity to visit the Olympic Village for one night on arrival in Rio before departing for Uberlandia. This enabled a couple of training sessions in the Olympic pool prior to arrival at the holding camp and again both athletes and coaches found this very helpful in orientation and preparation. The team spent 6 days in the Uberlandia holding camp and each of their personal coaches were present for this camp. Facilities at Uberlandia were rated highly and the holding camp experience was described by all as positive and upbeat. The only negative comments in relation to the camp in Uberlandia were that some of the Swim Ireland team felt they did not integrate fully with the athletes from other disciplines within Team Ireland.

### Pre-Games Training - Diving

The pre-Games preparation for Oliver Dingley was planned to take into account his specific circumstances. Firstly, due to the compulsory year out to enable him to qualify to compete for Ireland, Oliver needed competitive action.

Secondly, as the Olympic event would be held in an outdoor venue, he required experience of similar conditions. And finally as a result of transitioning to a small team environment, in comparison to what he previously experienced in British Diving, it was important for him to attend events with a smaller support team. A 4-month intensive competition period culminated in the only available qualification event for Oliver. Having achieved qualification, the preparation programme then focused on replicating the conditions (outdoor facilities and a team size of just diver and coach). Oliver did not attend the holding camp in Uberlandia as there was no diving facilities available there. Both Oliver and his coach Damian Ball were very satisfied with the quality of his preparation programme and believe that this was a key contributory factor in his performances at the Games.

### Support Services

The High Performance Programme has access to a range of support services including physio, strength and conditioning, nutrition and psychology expertise. The dispersed nature of the athletes competing at Rio – two were based in Ireland in the lead up to the Games whilst the other two were based abroad in Edinburgh and Canada – meant that the service provision was different for each athlete.

As a non-carded athlete in the lead up to Rio, Oliver Dingley and his coach was very complimentary about the access to and provision of support services made available to him. Both rated the level of support provided through the Sport Ireland Institute highly and the role Swim Ireland played in ensuring access to these services. However, in competition mode, the Diving programme does not have access to dedicated physio support services and they have worked around this by developing informal relationships with other international teams, such as Team GB and Team Canada, to avail of these services. This is not ideal and should be addressed into the future.

All of the athletes and coaches were satisfied with the quality and scope of nutrition advice and support on offer and found this service very helpful in their preparation programmes.

The feedback in relation to strength and conditioning support is mixed, with some coaches and athletes rating it highly and others indicating that more could be done in this area to add value to the athlete's preparations. In some of the one-to-one discussions as part of the review, the question was raised 'are the S&C services delivering the impact they should for our athletes?' It would seem that there are some differences in views in terms of the ideal training programme for swimmers between the coaches and the S&C service providers. The S&C professionals have raised questions about whether at times athletes are over-trained and equally the coaches are looking for more tailored S&C support for their athletes. This is an important area for reflection within the programme, and the coaches and S&C service providers should work closely together to ensure they are fully aligned and more closely integrated to provide the best support possible to the athletes.

The coaches within the programme identified a gap in the lack of provision of video analysis services. At present, this is not part of the programme. Both coaches and athletes believe that such a service would add considerable value and this should be addressed in future cycles. Such a service would assist both athletes and coaches in the analysis of swim stroke, comparative analytics and other relevant data analysis. This could and should be included within the programme both in training and competition mode.

Sports psychology services are provided as part of the High Performance Programme and the athletes availing of this rate it highly in terms of adding value to their preparation. The coaches within the programme were also supported through the Sport Ireland Institute PEP Programme. Damian Ball was added to this programme late in the cycle, after Oliver Dingley qualified and this was welcomed.

In order to kick on in High Performance terms, the programme needs to be more specific in targeting the areas where improvements need to be made – e.g. S&C, Performance Analysis – and challenge everyone involved harder (coaches, athletes and support service providers) to be more creative and innovative

in maximising the impact of all of these areas across the programme. For example, the provision of lactate testing, drag tests, heart rate monitoring, are other features that are currently not provided and would add value to the programme. There is room for the programme to 'up its game' more and provide reference points and KPIs for athletes to target as a means of demanding higher standards across coaches, athletes and service providers.

## GAMES EXPERIENCE

### Olympic Village

The Swim Ireland team arrived in the Olympic Village from Uberlandia on the 2nd August. The Diving team of Oliver Dingley and Damian Ball arrived from Dublin on the same day. The accommodation was basic and there were some issues apparent in terms of the finishing of the accommodation units, however this was similar to other teams in the Village.

The male athletes and coaches were assigned the same apartment within the Village housing 7 people and both athletes and coaches were uncomfortable with this arrangement. Both would have preferred to be in separate apartments to allow to ensure that they were

not 'living' with each other 24x7 throughout the Games. Also, they felt that the communication of arrivals and departures within the apartment could have been better. Fiona Doyle as the only female athlete was assigned to the same apartment as the Gymnastic Team.

The Swim Ireland team had 4 days in the Village before the Swim meet started and this was felt to be a perfect amount of time to orientate themselves and prepare for their respective events. The accommodation was well located, in close proximity to transport and dining facilities.

### Accreditation of Coaches

The personal coaches of two of the athletes – Fiona Doyle and Nicholas Quinn – were not allocated accreditation and both coaches (Mike Blondal and Chris Jones) were therefore denied access to the Village and Pool Deck during the pre-event training and competition days. This

was a source of considerable concern for both athletes and coaches alike. One training pass for these coaches was made available, after enquiries with the Olympic Council of Ireland, and the two coaches shared the pass to gain access during their athletes training times.

Peter Banks, Performance Director, performed the role of Head Coach and Team Manager and he found the challenge of managing these dual roles difficult throughout the Games. Ideally, accreditations could and should have been secured for the other two coaches to enable them support their athletes in training and competition. This would also have lightened the load on Peter Banks. Swim Ireland ensured that this was the case in previous events, such as the European Championships in London, and all of the athletes and coaches interviewed expressed disappointment that this was not the case in Rio.

The relationship between athlete and coach in both swimming and diving is a very close one. Whilst high performance athletes should be expected to take ownership of their training and performances, there is no question that not making provision for the athletes' personal coach accreditation for the biggest event of their careers will have a disruptive influence on their final preparation. This is especially pronounced for athletes that are based outside of the high performance programme in Ireland as they have less direct contact time with the Performance Director in a coaching capacity in the cycle leading up to the Games. This should be addressed in future Games and additional accreditations obtained where possible.

### **Embracing the Games Experience**

The team, with the exception of Oliver Dingley and Damian Ball, decided not to attend the Opening Ceremony on the 5th August, as the swimming competition commenced the following day. As the diving competition did not start until later in the Games both diver and coach agreed to embrace the Olympic Games fully and they attended and enjoyed the Opening Ceremony. However, they were very disappointed to learn that they, along with the swimmers, were expected to leave the Village immediately after they had competed and would not be staying for the Closing Ceremony.

This was a source of considerable frustration for athletes and coaches alike.

Ultimately, a resolution was reached for 2016. However, if the Games becomes merely another meet, then the athletes are missing out on a critical element of the Olympic experience. Athletes should be facilitated to remain within the Olympic Village after their events are completed, until the Closing Ceremony, if they wish to do so.

### **Family Support**

Each of the athletes highlighted issues regarding access to tickets for their family members. Each competitor was 'entitled' to one ticket per event (in other sports the allocation is two). This is inadequate and the allocation should be greater than this for each individual athlete.

In addition, the interviews with athletes indicated that there was little or no formal support or communication provided to their families whilst attending the Games. For example, there is no organised central location for family members to meet, such as a 'Team House or Venue' or lists of contact names of family supporters provided. This is an area that with some co-ordination by Swim Ireland could make the family experience a smoother, better one during the Games.

### Relationship with the OCI

Members of the team are of the perception that they are not held in as high a regard by the OCI as other sports within Team Ireland.

Whether this perception is reality or not is a moot point. It is essential that Swim Ireland and the OCI have a good working relationship and this needs to be strengthened. The athletes need to feel that they are part of a wider Team Ireland set-up that values and respects them as high performance athletes.

## **GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP OF THE HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME**

### Governance and Leadership

High Performance is a core pillar of the Swim Ireland strategy and as such is well positioned within the organisation. The Board of Swim Ireland regularly engage in discussion about and challenge the direction of the High Performance Programme. The Board recently re-committed to the future of the High Performance Programme and the implementation of a new High Performance Strategy.

The governance processes around the programme are strong. The management of the finances, selection processes and Board interaction reflect good governance practice. The complexity of having athletes working outside of the country with their own personal coaches was handled exceptionally well by the Performance Director. It was clear that very good working relationships were developed with each of the coaches and they were well supported by the PD in working with their athletes.

The day to day operational management processes of the programme itself in the London to Rio cycle was identified in self-reviews as requiring attention. It was felt that improved line management of staff, greater clarity of roles and continual challenging of ever-increasing standards were areas of weakness. The separation of the Performance Director and Head Coach roles in the future strategy will help address this area in the Tokyo cycle.

The success of Oliver Dingley has created an opportunity to develop a high performance Diving programme. However, the current support set-up does not cater for the increased competitive cycle that qualification for the World Series will entail. If Ireland is to be serious about leveraging this success to create a High Performance Diving Programme, then a full time performance coach will be required in the future.

The fundamental question that needs to be addressed in the future is 'can the programme be more demanding of all involved and push harder to deliver the target outcomes for Tokyo and beyond?' The answer is unquestionably yes. There is a need for all involved in the programme to 'up their game' in the next cycle to maximise the future talent pipeline and improve on solid foundations that have been laid from London to Rio.

## SWIMMING & DIVING RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this review the following recommendations are proposed for Swim Ireland to implement

1. Continue with the existing policy of setting the FINA 'A' Standard for Olympic qualification.
2. Continue with the policy of setting the final qualification event some 2/3 months in advance of the Games to enable sufficient preparation time for qualified athletes.
3. Target the relay event and set a strategy to ensure qualification of at least one relay team for Tokyo 2020.
4. Challenge the High Performance Programme to improve standards in every area of the programme.
5. Implement the new High Performance Strategy approved by the Board of Swim Ireland.
6. Separate the role of Performance Director and Head Coach (in line with the new High Performance Strategy).
7. Develop and resource a long-term Diving High Performance Programme to leverage the success of Rio 2016.
8. Formalise support service provision, especially in-competition physio support, for the Diving programme.
9. Ensure there is a more aligned and closer relationship between the coaches and service providers especially in the area of S&C.
10. Introduce video analysis support services into the High Performance Programme.
11. Identify new areas of value add service provision and innovation such as lactate testing, drag tests, and heart rate monitoring.
12. Establish a set of process related KPIs (i.e. not just swim time targets) for athletes and provide detailed feedback to drive the planning and activity of training programmes to target improvement against these process targets.
13. Resolve the non-branded team kit issue with the OCI.
14. Ensure coaches and athletes are roomed separately in the Olympic Village.
15. Secure additional coach accreditations to enable more coaches work directly with their athletes during the Games.
16. Facilitate athletes to remain at the Olympic Village until the Closing Ceremony if they wish to.
17. Increase the ticket allocation for athlete families.
18. Create a family support programme for those supporting athletes at the Games.
19. Improve the working relationship and communication with the OCI.
20. Ensure there is stronger role clarity and line management within the High Performance Programme.

## CONCLUSION

Swim Ireland are in agreement with and fully accepting of the recommendations outlined in this review. There is a recognition that the High Performance Programme is a work in progress. In order to compete, in a true high performance sense, athletes need to not just achieve the FINA 'A' Standard but exceed it comfortably to be genuinely competing for Olympic Semi-Finals and/or Finals. This is the level the programme is now aiming for.

The Rio Games was the first time that all Irish swimmers finished in the Top 20 in their events. The additional bonus of Oliver Dingley's qualification for his Diving Final, makes this the best Swim Ireland Games performance since 1996. However, it is accepted that to become a leading high performance programme within the Irish Olympic sports will require a further step up in performance levels.

The steady progression from previous Olympiads combined with the future talent pipeline, the development of a new High Performance Strategy, the Board of Swim Ireland's strong commitment to high performance and the full acceptance by Swim Ireland of this review and its' recommendations will be the platform to achieve higher levels of performance at Tokyo 2020 and beyond.

## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

The following were interviewed on a one-to-one basis as part of this review:

### Athletes

Nicholas Quinn  
Fiona Doyle  
Oliver Dingley  
Shane Ryan (was invited but not interviewed)

### Coaches

Peter Banks, High Performance Director  
Paul Donovan, Coach to Shane Ryan  
Chris Jones, Coach to Nicholas Quinn  
Michael Blondal, Coach to Fiona Doyle  
Damian Ball, Coach to Oliver Dingley

### Others

Niamh O'Sullivan, High Performance Manager  
Trisha Heberle, High Performance Consultant  
Steven McIvor, Sports Psychologist  
Stephen Martin, Deputy Chef de Mission (OCI)



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND





# Triathlon Ireland

Facilitator: Nancy Chillingworth

## Ireland qualified triathletes for both the male and female events at the 2016 Olympic Games

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Triathlon Ireland qualified 2 athletes for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Aileen Reid and Bryan Keane. Aileen Reid finished in 21st and Bryan Keane in 43rd position. Both athletes' results were below their pre Games expectations with prolonged illness and poor in-competition decision making contributing to the results.

Triathlon Ireland (TI) is an NGB with a performance programme clearly aligned to a structure of strong governance. The sport receives investment from Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland and is supported by both the Sport Ireland Institute (Institute) and Sport Institute Northern Ireland (SINI). It is recognised that there are good relationships with all stakeholders.

The performance programme is strong but more depth in the talent pool is needed for it to reach its potential. It is a sport which is on a progressive pathway in terms of performance and should continue along it.

For this continued progression to occur, TI needs to look at ways of increasing its Talent ID programmes in terms of both athletes and coaches in order to populate a successful programme. In addition to this, it needs to investigate opportunities to link with other national governing bodies (NGBs) in order to maximise support to athletes in a cross sport environment while fostering peer coach learning and reducing the overall cost for each individual NGB.

## INTRODUCTION

As part of its Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic review, Sport Ireland commissioned individual reviews into each of the participating sports. A panel of approved facilitators was appointed by Sport Ireland and NGBs could select from that list. The final report was approved by the Board of the NGB prior to being submitted to Sport Ireland for inclusion in the overall Rio 2016 Review.

## METHODOLOGY

The review methodology was devised by Sport Ireland and advised to Chris Kitchen, CEO, Triathlon Ireland (TI).

- Confidential on-line surveys were completed by members of the Triathlon team (including people who had an important role in the preparation for the Games but were not in Rio) as part of a wider Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Review. The survey was run from the 16th – 26th September 2016. There were four separate surveys for
  - Athletes
  - Coaching/Support Staff
  - Performance Director (PD)
  - CEO/Board Members

In Triathlon the surveys were issued to 2 athletes, 9 coaching/support staff, 1 Technical Director (TD) and 1 CEO. There was a good rate of response from 2 athletes, 6 coaching/support staff, 1 TD and 1 CEO. A report detailing summary group data, qualitative analysis and indicating outliers, was compiled from the survey and made available to the facilitator for further analysis.

- The online surveys for athletes, coaching /support staff and PDs focused on a number of key areas relating to preparation and readiness, performance and Games experience. The survey for the CEO/Board Members focused on governance and oversight of the High Performance (HP) programme. The focus elements in the athlete and staff surveys included:

11. Support elements in the year leading into the Games
12. Support from relevant organisations in the year leading into the Games
13. Daily training programme
14. Performance programme effectiveness
15. Games readiness
16. Athlete performance
17. Coaching performance
18. Support team performance
19. Games organisation & logistics
20. Games experience and Post-Games experience

- Based on the surveys, a number of common themes were identified which served as the basis for the interviews which were subsequently held. As the numbers involved in Triathlon were relatively low, a decision was made to interview everyone individually rather than holding focus groups. As a result, interviews were conducted either on a one-to-one basis or via phone or skype with 2 athletes, 4 coaching/support staff, the Lead Coach/Technical Director (TD) and the CEO. Interviews were held between the 5th October – 12th October.
- In addition to this, interviews were held with key stakeholders such as Sport Ireland, the Sport Ireland Institute and the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI)
- The issues, findings and recommendations in this report are based exclusively on the information received during the process through
  - Confidential online survey
  - Interviews with key TI personnel – athletes, coaches, service providers, TD and CEO
  - Interviews with key stakeholders.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Games Performance

| Athlete     | Event     | Result |
|-------------|-----------|--------|
| Aileen Reid | Triathlon | 21st   |
| Bryan Keane | Triathlon | 43rd   |

The original target for Triathlon was to qualify 2 males and 1 female athletes for the Games. One of the targeted male athletes suffered from over training syndrome resulting in one male and one female athlete qualifying. However, 4 male athletes did meet the eligibility criteria representing a slight increase in the number of athletes at this level.

There is a consensus within the sport that neither athlete's result was reflective of their potential at the Games. One athlete had suffered a prolonged illness earlier in the year which had set preparation back. Despite this the athletes entered the Games, physiologically in very good shape and at a high level of performance readiness. Having conducted their analysis of the races, staff are keen to draw a distinction between the actual swim, bike and run performances which had the athletes on course to achieve their targets and small mistakes in race awareness and transitions which cost them positions.

The decision to hold a pre-Games camp in Clermont, Florida was the correct one. A recce had taken place to Uberlandia and it was deemed to be unsuitable for triathlon. The team had already conducted altitude training in Font Romeu, France, so the focus in Clermont was training in comparable temperature and humidity to Rio. There was also a familiarity about it as they had trained there in January. The addition of a travelling training partner for the group was positive, but there can still be challenges with the intense environment of such a small group.

The consistency of staffing at the Games and over the cycle was very positive. The athletes had confidence in the Triathlon Ireland staff. This trust was evident in the decision to move out of the village and into a hotel in Copacabana prior to the race due to the transfer times. The decision was made and acted upon quickly by the TD with the athletes trusting him that it was correct. The decision to enter the village later from the pre-Games camp and to spend longer in the "Triathlon bubble" was seen as the correct decision.

Athletes and staff felt that they had little, if any, interaction with the OCI support team

in the village. There were no team manager meetings and no sport science team meeting, both of which would have been considered useful by the TI staff. This argument was countered by the OCI who claim that giving TI three accreditations for 2 athletes more than covered their requirements and that the use of a "Whatsapp" group served as adequate team manager communication. There was no medical screening on entering the village despite sports coming from a variety of regions and mixed rooming arrangements.

The CEO felt that his ability to network with other national federations and with the International Triathlon Union (ITU), in line with the strategic objective of TI to have more influence internationally, was hindered through not receiving an accreditation from the OCI.

While athletes in general had a positive Games experience, they felt that this was predominantly down to the fact that the TI staff took control and allowed them to focus solely on their performance. They felt that their experience was somewhat impacted by the support from the OCI staff for the Irish team in the Olympic Village.

There was a sense that more could have been done to foster a sense of Irish team camaraderie, such as making the accommodation homelier and attractive to spend time in. While there was a good sense of team among the athletes, the athletes themselves had to work hard to ensure it was there. They also felt that there was a sense of shame hanging over the Irish team at the Games and that this took away from their experience and the success of other athlete performances.

The post Games experience for athletes has been challenging. While support from the Sport Ireland Institute, and Lifestyle Services in particular, was praised, this remains a difficult time for athletes. Despite being aware of the need to plan something through the Sport Ireland Institute Evolution workshop series, some more personal contact via phone post Games could help to deal with the transition back into routine after the preparation and Games experience. The addition of a transition

support person at the Games was also identified as something that could help the transition for athletes in terms of the immediate post competition piece. There was some suggestion that it would be useful for a workshop/information day for families of athletes around expectations in terms of athlete access and the impact they can have on performance at the Games. It would also be an opportunity to acknowledge the role that they have in the success of the athlete. This could potentially be run on an all sport basis through the OCI or the Sport Ireland Institute.

### **Programme Performance**

Following London 2012, a decision was made to foster domestic leadership through the Lead Coach. Consequently, the leadership role was filled by one person who was both Technical Director (TD) and Lead Coach. While it was unanimously acknowledged that the TD has done a great job with the programme, there is a genuine concern that the combination of the two roles is unsustainable. There is a dependency on behalf of the athletes with both lacking confidence in anyone else to coach them within the Irish system.

Triathlon is a sport in continued progression in Ireland. The post London 2012 review identified there being some reluctance on the part of some athletes and coaches in terms of buy in to a performance system with extensive use of analytical tools. This system has now been fully integrated and most of the engagement issues have disappeared. Part of this is simply due to the evolution of a relatively new programme where more senior athletes have already established set ups. There is a sense that newer athletes progressing through the system are more fully integrated into and engaged with the programme.

There remains a challenge with the depth of the athlete pool. While the numbers of triathletes at a participatory level continues to grow in Ireland, there are still small numbers progressing through a talent pathway. With limited resources in terms of funding and personnel, it has been difficult to identify potential talent. The introduction of Draft Legal Superseries races into the domestic race

programme and the introduction of standard testing criteria and the roll out of this to club coaches are seen as positives in this area but it would appear that one of the most effective routes would be to work with Swim Ireland on the transfer of swimmers who are falling just outside the times of elite swimming potential.

Challenges around balancing training and competition with third level education were identified. Whether this is more easily identified at the moment due to where TI is in its development in that the majority of athletes are at that stage, or whether it will continue to be an issue due to the number of hours required for training remains to be seen. Internationally there is a trend towards athletes giving up education to focus completely on the sport but this does not fit in with funding and TI's view of all-round athlete support. The triathlon hub in UL appears to be working well. This was initially supported through the Sport Ireland Institute and has now been taken over by TI. There is still collaboration between TI, the Sport Ireland Institute and UL with a project currently underway using the altitude house and combining TI, the Sport Ireland Institute and a research project for the university. There are 2 triathlon scholarships in UL. TI is now looking at the potential of replicating this in other universities with the intention of attracting triathletes with HP potential to select colleges where training opportunities are greater and there is an established link with the TI performance programme.

As mentioned, there is a reliance on the TD within the elite athletes in relation to coaching and there appears to be a significant gap between club level coaches and this individual. While the ideal situation may be to have three elite coaches, each expert in one discipline with a PD to oversee the programme, this is not feasible for a programme the size of TI. There is a need to continue to educate and upskill coaches within the system through exposure to the Emerging Talent Programme and Talent Development Squad. In a sport with a culture of paid coaching at individual and club level, it is important that the TI goals in terms of long term athlete development (LTAD) are instilled throughout the TI coaching structure. There is a concern that the need for a coach to deliver

junior or event results could compromise this leading to burn out or injury of potential athletes. There are already some links established with coaches in other NGBs such as Cycling Ireland, Swim Ireland and Athletics Ireland. Continued fostering of these relationships will strengthen the coach base for Triathlon as, in many cases, the coaching talent is already in existence in Ireland within each discipline. There is an acceptance that, while coaching is an area being targeted for development by Triathlon Ireland, the best course in the short term may be to place high level athletes in overseas training groups to guarantee levels of coaching as well as access to high level training partners. The relationship between the TD and these training groups is essential to ensure athletes are being properly supported, communication links are strong and to facilitate a smooth transition back into the national programme at the right time.

The cost of the qualification for the Olympic Games is high due to the number of races often required from an Irish perspective and the location of those races. A recommendation from the London Review was for Ireland to seek to host an International event. TI considers the cost of this too high to be feasible at the current time. Instead they have focused on strategically targeting races where most qualification points could be achieved. In triathlon, slots are qualified for the nation rather than individual athletes. There is a need to increase the pool of elite level athletes to ensure a larger number are eligible for selection. This increase in competition for selection will help athletes to keep the competitive edge in the lead in to the Games.

More group training and international training camps has been identified as an area required for the Tokyo 2020 cycle. This is another area where it may be practical to link with other NGBs. There would be greater economies of scale if a base were found that would suit a number of sports and each could contribute to the resourcing of the base with support staff, potentially from the Sport Ireland Institute. TI has also begun to forge links with other national triathlon federations around combined training camps for development level athletes.

With such small numbers, post event debriefs and feedback take place on a one-to-one basis within 48 hours of the event with a main Triathlon is well supported through the Sport Ireland Institute and one athlete was fully individual review annually, and this system works well. supported through Sport Institute Northern Ireland (SINI). The Sport Ireland Institute assisted with support for the set-up of the Triathlon hub in University of Limerick (UL). This has now been taken over by TI but the links through personnel and contact remain.

The talent pipeline is increasing but there is still work to be done to increase the number of athletes progressing through from identified potential to elite level. TI has developed standardised testing for talent ID which is now being spread out to club coaches. Triathlon is a sport that lends itself to talent transfer and this is an area that could be further exploited in Ireland in terms of working with the other NGBs to target athletes who are just outside the criteria for the elite level in other relevant sports and swimming in particular.

### **Management Performance**

There is consensus among everyone interviewed for this survey that Triathlon Ireland has strong governance structures. The board provides oversight that the performance strategy is correct and does not try to take on an operational role. The relationships between the CEO, TD and support staff appear strong and conducive to positive performance focused progression.

The lines of management are clear but there may need to be a shifting of roles to ensure that, if the role of TD/Lead Coach remains, there is adequate support from a logistical and administrative perspective to ease the workload.

Triathlon operates on an Olympic Games strategic planning cycle and work is currently underway to finalise the strategic plan to run from 2017 through to the end of 2020.

Investment in performance from Sport Ireland has increased slightly over the cycle from €260,000 in 2013 to €270,000 in 2016. As with all sports, TI would like to see this figure

increase and has identified the annual investment set up a challenge for full Olympic cycle planning. The transition of Carding investment from Sport Ireland into TI has been positive as it has enabled the sport to use some of the investment on a squad basis to ensure greater availability of services and access to competition for athletes. There is a challenge for Sport Ireland in investing in a sport like Triathlon. While it recognises that it is a strong NGB in terms of governance, structures and policies around the performance programme, ultimately it is a sport where there are only two medal events at the Games (one female and one male). The lack of depth in athlete numbers is also seen as a barrier to increased investment and Triathlon is considered a project sport in terms of high performance investment and support. For sports such as this, it is important that there are clearly outlined parameters on what constitutes performance success from an investment perspective.

#### **Stakeholder relationships**

Triathlon Ireland has generally positive relationships with its stakeholders. Relationships with Sport Ireland and the Sport Ireland Institute are strong and TI is viewed as an NGB that is going about its performance business in the correct manner. There is not a lot of contact between TI and the OCI. TI would like a better understanding of potential financial supports available from the OCI and the OCI feels that there could have been clearer communication in the lead in to the Olympic Games around the holding camp decision. This is contested by TI who claim they communicated both through meeting and email regarding the decision. Triathlon Ireland has a good relationship with the International Triathlon Union (ITU) and has identified a number of areas for potential increased influence from an Irish perspective. These include seeking to have Irish appointees to positions on the ITU Coaches Committee, Technical Committee, Constitution Committee and on the Board of the ITU. Triathlon Ireland has also established strong partnerships with a number of sponsors.

#### **SUMMARY**

In summary, Triathlon Ireland is an NGB with strong governance structures and stakeholder relationships and performance programme. Its challenge is to focus on talent identification and development of athletes and coaches to continue the progress that has been achieved in the last Olympic cycle.

## TRIATHLON RECOMMENDATIONS

### Triathlon Ireland recommendations:

1. Ideally separate the TD and Lead Coach role. If this is not practical given the size of the programme, provide additional logistical and administrative support to the TD.
2. Formalise the coach development structure. In the short term identify coaches with potential to succeed at the highest level and look to fast track support for them potentially through international contacts or domestic discipline specific contacts ensuring they are aligned with the TI performance system.
3. Reduce the dependence of athletes on the TD at the Talent Development Squad level through clearly defined roles and expectation setting.
4. Increase the number of athletes in the talent pipeline through continuing with the current Talent ID programme and investigating more formalised talent transfer options with Swim Ireland.
5. Investigate the viability of multi-sport or two sport training camps with Athletics Ireland, Cycling Ireland and Swim Ireland where resources could be pooled and/or identify appropriate international training groups for elite level athletes in year one and two of the cycle.
6. Set a clear policy around the introduction of new equipment at major championships.

### Non Triathlon specific recommendations:

1. Include an athlete lifestyle support practitioner as part of the Tokyo 2020 team to begin the post Games support immediately after competition. Ideally this person should be involved in the programme with the majority of athletes pre Games.
2. Include a family expectations workshop in the pre Games preparation programme designed to acknowledge the importance of families and to set clear expectations of how they can assist during the Games in terms of avoiding distraction, contact and access expectations etc.





SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
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## Appendices

# Appendix 1: Survey Results

## Athletes Post-Games Survey

### IN THE YEAR LEADING UP TO THE GAMES, HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING

ANSWERED: 45 SKIPPED: 0



### IN THE YEAR LEADING UP TO THE GAMES, PLEASE RATE THE SUPPORT FROM THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS

ANSWERED: 45 SKIPPED: 0



### TO WHAT EXTENT WOULD YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTIONS OF THE DAILY TRAINING ENVIRONMENT?

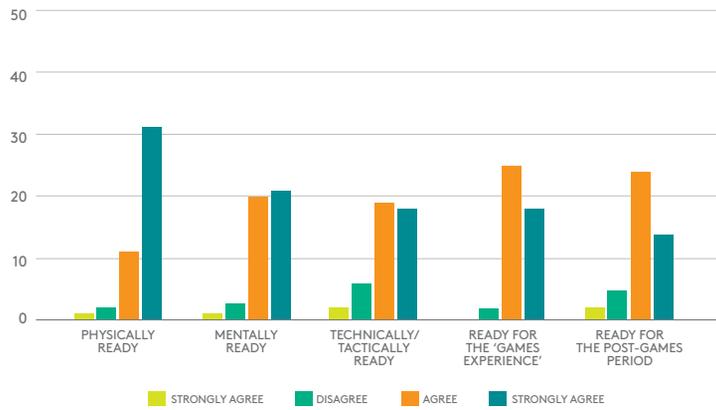
ANSWERED: 43 SKIPPED: 2



## Athletes Post-Games Survey

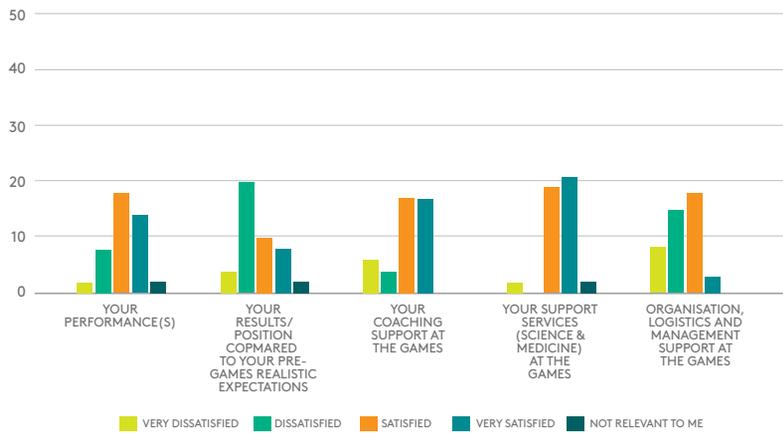
IN TERMS OF YOU READINESS FOR THE RIO GAMES,  
HOW WOULD YOU RATE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS

ANSWERED: 45 SKIPPED: 0



AT THE GAMES, HOW SATISFIED  
ARE YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING

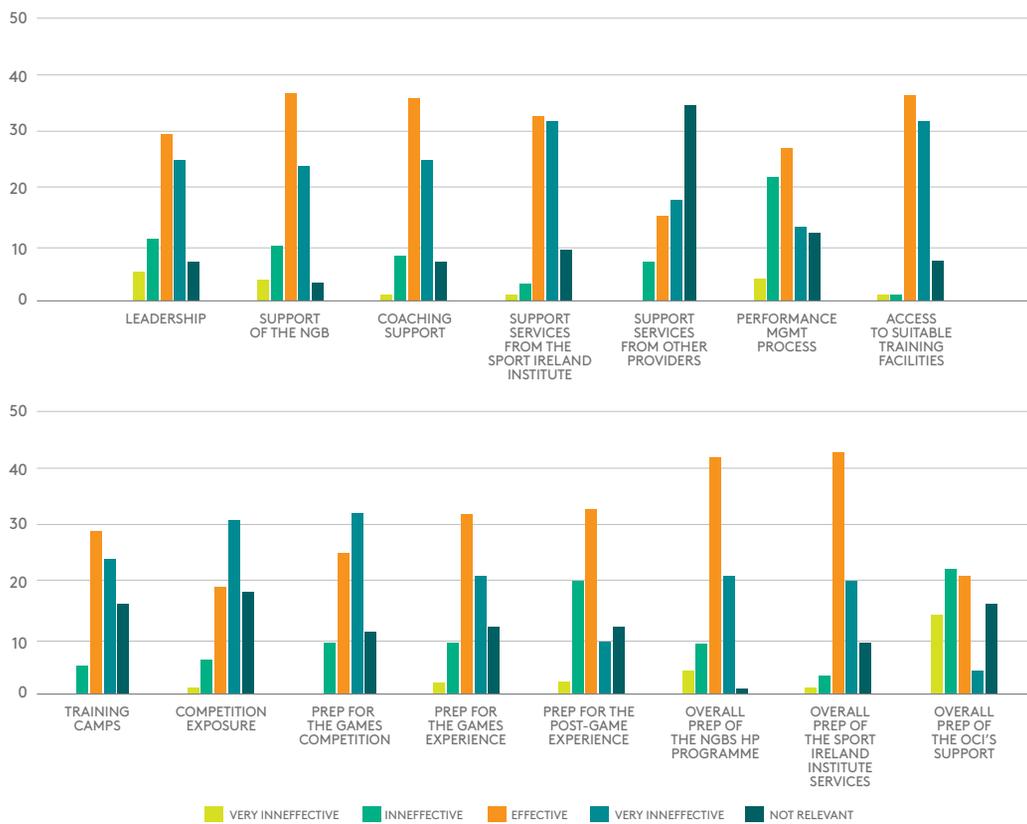
ANSWERED: 44 SKIPPED: 1



## Coaches/Support Staff Post-Games Survey

### HOW EFFECTIVE WERE THE FOLLOWING PARTS OF THE PROGRAMME IN THE YEAR LEADING UP TO THE GAMES

ANSWERED: 79 SKIPPED: 13



## Performance Director Post-Games Survey

### HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF YOUR PROGRAMME IN THE YEAR LEADING UP TO THE GAMES

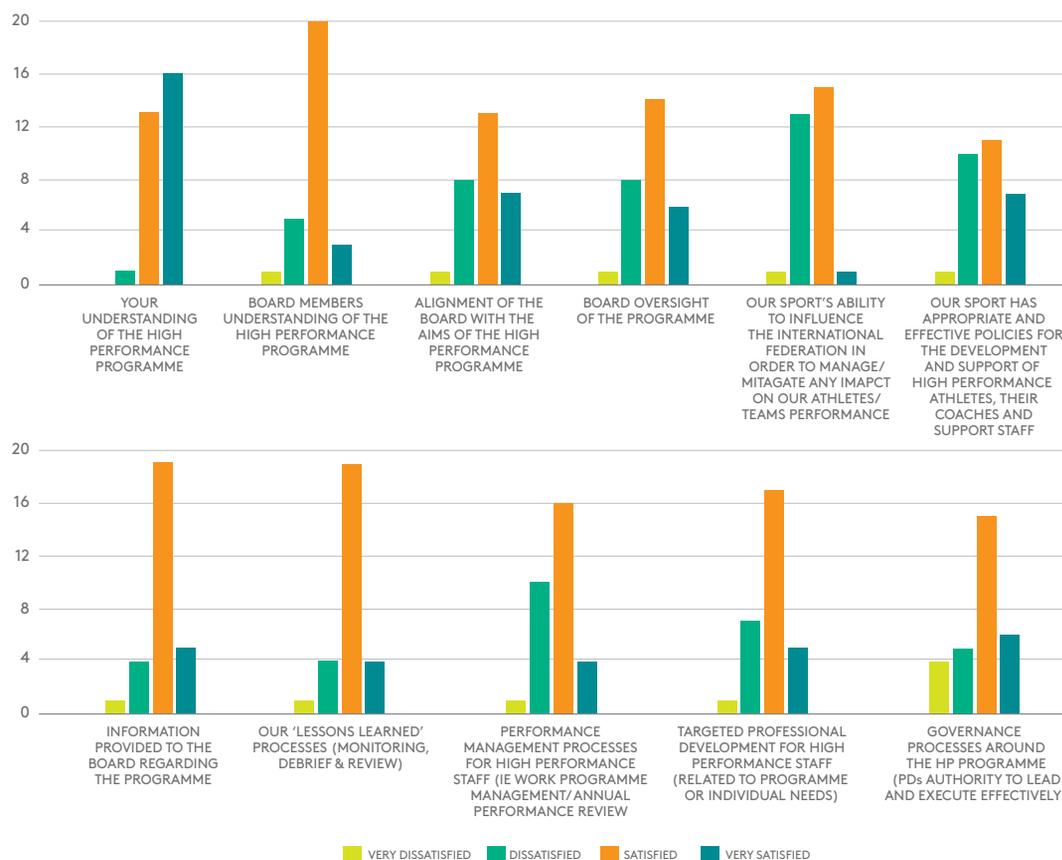
ANSWERED: 14 SKIPPED: 0



## CEO/Board Member Post-Games Survey

### IN RELATION TO THE GOVERNANCE OF HIGH PERFORMANCE, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING

ANSWERED: 30 SKIPPED: 0



## Appendix 2: Rio 2016 Olympic Games Performances

| Athletics           | Event                          | Result   |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Robert Heffernan    | 50km Race Walks                | 6th overall 3:53.45  |
| Brendan Boyce       | 50km Race Walks                | 19th overall 3:53.59   |
| Alex Wright         | 50km Race Walks                | DNF  |
| Alex Wright         | 20km Race Walks                | 46th 1:25:25   |
| Mark English        | 800m                           | 5th in Semi-final 1:45.93 - 17th overall                       |
| Thomas Barr         | 400m Hurdles                   | 4th overall 47.97  |
| Ciara Mageean       | 1500m                          | 11th in Semi-final 4:08.07 - 17th overall                      |
| Ciara Everard       | 800m                           | 8th in Heats 27th overall 2:07.91                              |
| Sara Treacy         | 3000 Steeple Chase             | 17th overall in Final 9:52.70                                  |
| Kerry O'Flaherty    | 3000 Steeple Chase             | 14th in heat 9:45.35   |
| Michelle Finn       | 3000 Steeple Chase             | 11th in heat 9:49.45   |
| Kevin Seaward       | Marathon                       | 64th overall 2:20.06   |
| Mick Clohisey       | Marathon                       | 103rd overall 2:26.34  |
| Paul Pollock        | Marathon                       | 32nd overall 2:16.24   |
| Fionnuala McCormack | Marathon                       | 20th 2:31.22   |
| Breege Connolly     | Marathon                       | 76th 2:44.41   |
| Lizzie Lee          | Marathon                       | 57th 2:39.57   |
| Tori Pena           | Pole Vault                     | 27th overall 4.30m   |
| Badminton           | Event                          | Result   |
| Scott Evans         | Mens Singles                   | Joint 9th overall - Last 16 - Won both pool matches            |
| Chloe Magee         | Womens Singles                 | Preliminaries - Lost both pool matches                         |
| Boxing              | Event                          | Result   |
| Paddy Barnes        | 49kg                           | Last 32 - 1 bout - lost 1-2 to Samuel Carmona (Spain)          |
| Michael Conlon      | 56kg                           | Qtr final - 2 bouts - Lost 3-0 to Vladimir Nikitin (RUS)       |
| Stephen Donnelly    | 69kg                           | Qtr final - 3 bouts - Lost 1-2 to Mohammed Rabii (Morocco)     |
| Joe Ward            | 81kg                           | Last 16 - 1 bout - Lost 1-2 to Carlos Andres Mina (Ecuador)    |
| Katie Taylor        | 60kg                           | Qtr final - 1 bout - Lost 1-2 to Mira Potkonen (Finland)       |
| Brendan Irvine      | 52kg                           | Last 32 - 1 bout - Lost 3-0 to Shakhobidin Zoirov (Uzbekistan) |
| David Oliver Joyce  | 60kg                           | Last 16 - 2 bouts - Lost 3-0 to Albert Selimov (Azerbaijan)    |
| Ciara Everard       | 800m                           | 8th in Heats 27th overall 2:07.91                              |
| Cycling             | Event                          | Result   |
| Dan Martin          | Cycling - Road                 | 13th overall   |
| Nicholas Roche      | Cycling - Road                 | 29th overall   |
| Shannon McCurley    | Cycling - Track (Female Kerin) | 4th out of 5 in Repechage (5th out of 7 in heats)              |
| Diving              | Event                          | Result   |
| Oliver Dingley      | Diving - 3m Springboard        | 8th overall in Final 442.90                                    |

| Equestrian  | Event               | Result                                      |
|---|---------------------|---|
| Greg Broderick  | Show Jumping        | T50th overall - Eliminated in Final Round A |
| Judy Reynolds   | Dressage            | 18th overall 75.696%                        |
| Team - Clare Abbott,<br>Jonty Evans, Mark Kyle,<br>Padraig McCarthy | Team Eventing       | 8th overall out of 13 teams                 |
| Clare Abbott  | Individual Eventing | Overall 37th 112.60                         |
| Jonty Evans   | Individual Eventing | Overall 9th 64.60                           |
| Mark Kyle   | Individual Eventing | Overall 33rd 109.20                         |
| Padraig McCarthy  | Individual Eventing | Eliminated                                  |
| Golf  | Event               | Result                                      |
| Padraig Harrington  | Men                 | T21st overall                               |
| Seamus Power  | Men                 | T15th overall                               |
| Leona Maguire   | Women               | T21st overall                               |
| Stephanie Meadow  | Women               | T31st overall                               |
| Gymnastics  | Event               | Result                                      |
| Kieran Behan  | MAG                 | 38th overall - 83.232                       |
| Eillis O'Reilly   | WAG                 | 57th overall - 47.932                       |
| Hockey  | Event               | Result                                      |
| Team Ireland (18 players)   | Men's team          | 10th overall - 5th out of 6 teams in Pool   |
| Pentathlon  | Event               | Result                                      |
| Arthur Lanigan-O'Keeffe   | Men                 | 8th overall score: 1457                     |
| Natalya Coyle   | Women Elite         | 7th overall score: 1325                     |
| Rowing  | Event               | Result                                      |
| Sinead Jennings & Claire Lambe                                      | LW2x                | 6th overall in A Final                      |
| Paul O'Donovan & Gary O'Donovan                                     | LM2x                | 2nd overall in A Final - Silver medal       |
| Sanita Puspure  | W1X                 | 13th Overall - 1st in C Final               |
| Stephanie Meadow  | Women               | T31st overall                               |
| Sailing   | Event               | Result                                      |
| Annalise Murphy   | Laser Radial        | 2nd overall - Silver medal                  |
| Finn Lynch  | Laser Standard      | 32nd overall                                |
| Ryan Seaton & Matt McGovern   | 49er                | 10th overall                                |
| Saskia Tidey & Andrea Brewster                                      | 49erFX              | 12th overall                                |
| Swimming  | Event               | Result                                      |
| Fiona Doyle   | 100m Breaststroke   | 20th overall - Heats 1:07.58                |
| Fiona Doyle   | 200m Breaststroke   | 25th overall - Heats 2:29.76                |
| Shane Ryan  | 50m Freestyle       | 43rd overall - Heats 22.88                  |
| Shane Ryan  | 100m Backstroke     | 16th overall - Semi-final 53.85             |
| Shane Ryan  | 100m Freestyle      | 40th overall - Heats 49.82                  |
| Nicholas Quinn  | 100m Breaststroke   | 33rd overall - Heats 1:01.29                |
| Nicholas Quinn  | 200m Breaststroke   | 19th overall - Heats 2:11.67                |
| Triathlon   | Event               | Result                                      |
| Bryan Keane   | Men's Elite         | 40th overall                                |
| Aileen Reid   | Womens Elite        | 21st overall                                |

## Appendix 3: Rio 2016 Olympic Medal Table

|                      | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|----------------------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1 UNITED STATES      | 46   | 37     | 38     | 121   |
| 2 GREAT BRITAIN      | 27   | 23     | 17     | 67    |
| 3 CHINA              | 26   | 18     | 26     | 70    |
| 4 RUSSIAN FEDERATION | 19   | 18     | 19     | 56    |
| 5 GERMANY            | 17   | 10     | 15     | 42    |
| 6 JAPAN              | 12   | 8      | 21     | 41    |
| 7 FRANCE             | 10   | 18     | 14     | 42    |
| 8 SOUTH KOREA        | 9    | 3      | 9      | 21    |
| 9 ITALY              | 8    | 12     | 8      | 28    |
| 10 AUSTRALIA         | 8    | 11     | 10     | 29    |
| 11 NETHERLANDS       | 8    | 7      | 4      | 19    |
| 12 HUNGARY           | 8    | 3      | 4      | 15    |
| 13 BRAZIL            | 7    | 6      | 6      | 19    |
| 14 SPAIN             | 7    | 4      | 6      | 17    |
| 15 KENYA             | 6    | 6      | 1      | 13    |
| 16 JAMAICA           | 6    | 3      | 2      | 11    |
| 17 CROATIA           | 5    | 3      | 2      | 10    |
| 18 CUBA              | 5    | 2      | 4      | 11    |
| 19 NEW ZEALAND       | 4    | 9      | 5      | 18    |
| 20 CANADA            | 4    | 3      | 15     | 22    |
| 21 UZBEKISTAN        | 4    | 2      | 7      | 13    |
| 22 KAZAKHSTAN        | 3    | 5      | 9      | 17    |
| 23 COLOMBIA          | 3    | 2      | 3      | 8     |
| 24 SWITZERLAND       | 3    | 2      | 2      | 7     |
| 25 IRAN              | 3    | 1      | 4      | 8     |
| 26 GREECE            | 3    | 1      | 2      | 6     |
| 27 ARGENTINA         | 3    | 1      | 0      | 4     |
| 28 DENMARK           | 2    | 6      | 7      | 15    |
| 29 SWEDEN            | 2    | 6      | 3      | 11    |
| 30 SOUTH AFRICA      | 2    | 6      | 2      | 10    |
| 31 UKRAINE           | 2    | 5      | 4      | 11    |
| 32 SERBIA            | 2    | 4      | 2      | 8     |
| 33 POLAND            | 2    | 3      | 6      | 11    |
| 34 NORTH KOREA       | 2    | 3      | 2      | 7     |
| 35 BELGIUM           | 2    | 2      | 2      | 6     |
| 35 THAILAND          | 2    | 2      | 2      | 6     |
| 37 SLOVAKIA          | 2    | 2      | 0      | 4     |
| 38 GEORGIA           | 2    | 1      | 4      | 7     |
| 39 AZERBAIJAN        | 1    | 7      | 10     | 18    |
| 40 BELARUS           | 1    | 4      | 4      | 9     |
| 41 TURKEY            | 1    | 3      | 4      | 8     |
| 42 ARMENIA           | 1    | 3      | 0      | 4     |
| 43 CZECH REPUBLIC    | 1    | 2      | 7      | 10    |
| 44 ETHIOPIA          | 1    | 2      | 5      | 8     |

|                            | Gold     | Silver   | Bronze   | Total    |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 45 SLOVENIA                | 1        | 2        | 1        | 4        |
| 46 INDONESIA               | 1        | 2        | 0        | 3        |
| 47 ROMANIA                 | 1        | 1        | 3        | 5        |
| 48 BAHRAIN                 | 1        | 1        | 0        | 2        |
| 48 VIETNAM                 | 1        | 1        | 0        | 2        |
| 50 TAIPEI (CHINESE TAIPEI) | 1        | 0        | 2        | 3        |
| 51 BAHAMAS                 | 1        | 0        | 1        | 2        |
| 51 CÔTE D'IVOIRE           | 1        | 0        | 1        | 2        |
| 51 IOA                     | 1        | 0        | 1        | 2        |
| 54 FIJI                    | 1        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| 54 JORDAN                  | 1        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| 54 KOSOVO                  | 1        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| 54 PUERTO RICO             | 1        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| 54 SINGAPORE               | 1        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| 54 TAJIKISTAN              | 1        | 0        | 0        | 1        |
| 60 MALAYSIA                | 0        | 4        | 1        | 5        |
| 61 MEXICO                  | 0        | 3        | 2        | 5        |
| 62 ALGERIA                 | 0        | 2        | 0        | 2        |
| <b>62 IRELAND</b>          | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> |
| 64 LITHUANIA               | 0        | 1        | 3        | 4        |
| 65 BULGARIA                | 0        | 1        | 2        | 3        |
| 65 VENEZUELA               | 0        | 1        | 2        | 3        |
| 67 INDIA                   | 0        | 1        | 1        | 2        |
| 67 MONGOLIA                | 0        | 1        | 1        | 2        |
| 69 BURUNDI                 | 0        | 1        | 0        | 1        |
| 69 GRENADA                 | 0        | 1        | 0        | 1        |
| 69 NIGER                   | 0        | 1        | 0        | 1        |
| 69 PHILIPPINES             | 0        | 1        | 0        | 1        |
| 69 QATAR                   | 0        | 1        | 0        | 1        |
| 74 NORWAY                  | 0        | 0        | 4        | 4        |
| 75 EGYPT                   | 0        | 0        | 3        | 3        |
| 75 TUNISIA                 | 0        | 0        | 3        | 3        |
| 77 ISRAEL                  | 0        | 0        | 2        | 2        |
| 78 AUSTRIA                 | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| 78 DOMINICAN REPUBLIC      | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| 78 ESTONIA                 | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| 78 FINLAND                 | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| 78 MOROCCO                 | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| 78 REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA     | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| 78 NIGERIA                 | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| 78 PORTUGAL                | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| 78 TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO     | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |
| 78 UNITED ARAB EMIRATES    | 0        | 0        | 1        | 1        |

## Appendix 4: Rio 2016 Olympic Games Medal Table (by capita):

|    |                     | Medals | Population  | Population per Medal |
|----|---------------------|--------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1  | GRENADA             | 1      | 106,825     | 106,825              |
| 2  | BAHAMAS             | 2      | 388,019     | 194,009              |
| 3  | JAMAICA             | 11     | 2,725,941   | 247,812              |
| 4  | NEW ZEALAND         | 18     | 4,595,700   | 255,316              |
| 5  | DENMARK             | 15     | 5,676,002   | 378,400              |
| 6  | CROATIA             | 10     | 4,224,404   | 422,440              |
| 7  | SLOVENIA            | 4      | 2,063,768   | 515,942              |
| 8  | GEORGIA             | 7      | 3,679,000   | 525,571              |
| 9  | AZERBAIJAN          | 18     | 9,651,349   | 536,186              |
| 10 | HUNGARY             | 15     | 9,844,686   | 656,312              |
| 11 | BAHRAIN             | 2      | 1,377,237   | 688,618              |
| 12 | LITHUANIA           | 4      | 2,910,199   | 727,549              |
| 13 | ARMENIA             | 4      | 3,017,712   | 754,428              |
| 14 | AUSTRALIA           | 29     | 23,781,169  | 820,040              |
| 15 | SERBIA              | 8      | 7,098,247   | 887,280              |
| 16 | SWEDEN              | 11     | 9,798,871   | 890,806              |
| 17 | NETHERLANDS         | 19     | 16,936,520  | 891,395              |
| 18 | FIJI                | 1      | 892,145     | 892,145              |
| 19 | GREAT BRITAIN       | 67     | 65,138,232  | 972,212              |
| 20 | KAZAKHSTAN          | 17     | 17,544,126  | 1,032,007            |
| 21 | CUBA                | 11     | 11,389,562  | 1,035,414            |
| 22 | CZECH REPUBLIC      | 10     | 10,551,219  | 1,055,121            |
| 23 | BELARUS             | 9      | 9,513,000   | 1,057,000            |
| 24 | SWITZERLAND         | 7      | 8,286,976   | 1,183,853            |
| 25 | NORWAY              | 4      | 5,195,921   | 1,298,980            |
| 26 | ESTONIA             | 1      | 1,311,998   | 1,311,998            |
| 27 | SLOVAKIA            | 4      | 5,424,050   | 1,356,012            |
| 28 | TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO | 1      | 1,360,088   | 1,360,088            |
| 29 | MONGOLIA            | 2      | 2,959,134   | 1,479,567            |
| 30 | FRANCE              | 42     | 66,808,385  | 1,590,675            |
| 31 | CANADA              | 22     | 35,851,774  | 1,629,626            |
| 32 | GREECE              | 6      | 10,823,732  | 1,803,955            |
| 33 | KOSOVO              | 1      | 1,859,203   | 1,859,203            |
| 34 | BELGIUM             | 6      | 11,285,721  | 1,880,953            |
| 35 | GERMANY             | 42     | 81,413,145  | 1,938,408            |
| 36 | ITALY               | 28     | 60,802,085  | 2,171,503            |
| 37 | QATAR               | 1      | 2,235,355   | 2,235,355            |
| 38 | IRELAND             | 2      | 4,640,703   | 2,320,351            |
| 39 | BULGARIA            | 3      | 7,177,991   | 2,392,663            |
| 40 | UZBEKISTAN          | 13     | 31,299,500  | 2,407,653            |
| 41 | SOUTH KOREA         | 21     | 50,617,045  | 2,410,335            |
| 42 | RUSSIAN FEDERATION  | 56     | 144,096,812 | 2,573,157            |
| 43 | UNITED STATES       | 121    | 321,418,820 | 2,656,353            |

|    |                      | Medals | Population    | Population per Medal |
|----|----------------------|--------|---------------|----------------------|
| 44 | SPAIN                | 17     | 46,418,269    | 2,730,486            |
| 45 | JAPAN                | 41     | 126,958,472   | 3,096,548            |
| 46 | POLAND               | 11     | 37,999,494    | 3,454,499            |
| 47 | PUERTO RICO          | 1      | 3,474,182     | 3,474,182            |
| 48 | KENYA                | 13     | 46,050,302    | 3,542,330            |
| 49 | MOLDOVA              | 1      | 3,554,150     | 3,554,150            |
| 50 | NORTH KOREA          | 7      | 25,155,317    | 3,593,616            |
| 51 | TUNISIA              | 3      | 11,107,800    | 3,702,600            |
| 52 | ROMANIA              | 5      | 19,832,389    | 3,966,477            |
| 53 | UKRAINE              | 11     | 45,198,200    | 4,108,927            |
| 54 | ISRAEL               | 2      | 8,380,400     | 4,190,200            |
| 55 | FINLAND              | 1      | 5,482,013     | 5,482,013            |
| 56 | SOUTH AFRICA         | 10     | 54,956,920    | 5,495,692            |
| 57 | SINGAPORE            | 1      | 5,535,002     | 5,535,002            |
| 58 | COLOMBIA             | 8      | 48,228,704    | 6,028,588            |
| 59 | MALAYSIA             | 5      | 30,331,007    | 6,066,201            |
| 60 | JORDAN               | 1      | 7,594,547     | 7,594,547            |
| 61 | TAIWAN               | 3      | 23,510,000    | 7,836,666            |
| 62 | TAJIKISTAN           | 1      | 8,481,855     | 8,481,855            |
| 63 | AUSTRIA              | 1      | 8,611,088     | 8,611,088            |
| 64 | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES | 1      | 9,156,963     | 9,156,963            |
| 65 | TURKEY               | 8      | 78,665,830    | 9,833,228            |
| 66 | IRAN                 | 8      | 79,109,272    | 9,888,659            |
| 67 | PORTUGAL             | 1      | 10,348,648    | 10,348,648           |
| 68 | VENEZUELA            | 3      | 31,108,083    | 10,369,361           |
| 69 | DOMINICAN REPUBLIC   | 1      | 10,528,391    | 10,528,391           |
| 70 | ARGENTINA            | 4      | 43,416,755    | 10,854,188           |
| 71 | BRAZIL               | 19     | 207,847,528   | 10,939,343           |
| 72 | BURUNDI              | 1      | 11,178,921    | 11,178,921           |
| 73 | THAILAND             | 6      | 67,959,359    | 11,326,559           |
| 74 | CÔTE D'IVOIRE        | 2      | 22,701,556    | 11,350,778           |
| 75 | ETHIOPIA             | 8      | 99,390,750    | 12,423,843           |
| 76 | CHINA                | 70     | 1,371,220,000 | 19,588,857           |
| 77 | ALGERIA              | 2      | 39,666,519    | 19,833,259           |
| 78 | NIGER                | 1      | 19,899,120    | 19,899,120           |
| 79 | MEXICO               | 5      | 127,017,224   | 25,403,444           |
| 80 | EGYPT                | 3      | 91,508,084    | 30,502,694           |
| 81 | MOROCCO              | 1      | 34,377,511    | 34,377,511           |
| 82 | VIETNAM              | 2      | 91,703,800    | 45,851,900           |
| 83 | INDONESIA            | 3      | 257,563,815   | 85,854,605           |
| 84 | PHILIPPINES          | 1      | 100,699,395   | 100,699,395          |
| 85 | NIGERIA              | 1      | 182,201,962   | 182,201,962          |
| 86 | INDIA                | 2      | 1,311,050,527 | 655,525,263          |

## Appendix 5: Rio 2016 Olympic Games Medal Table (by GDP):

|    |                | Medals | GDP (in billions USD) | GDP per medal (in billions USD) |
|----|----------------|--------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1  | JAMAICA        | 11     | \$14                  | \$1                             |
| 2  | GRENADA        | 1      | \$1                   | \$1                             |
| 3  | GEORGIA        | 7      | \$14                  | \$2                             |
| 4  | AZERBAIJAN     | 18     | \$53                  | \$3                             |
| 5  | ARMENIA        | 4      | \$11                  | \$3                             |
| 6  | BURUNDI        | 1      | \$3                   | \$3                             |
| 7  | NORTH KOREA    | 7      | \$28                  | \$4                             |
| 8  | BAHAMAS        | 2      | \$9                   | \$4                             |
| 9  | FIJI           | 1      | \$4                   | \$4                             |
| 10 | KENYA          | 13     | \$63                  | \$5                             |
| 11 | CROATIA        | 10     | \$49                  | \$5                             |
| 12 | UZBEKISTAN     | 13     | \$67                  | \$5                             |
| 13 | BELARUS        | 9      | \$55                  | \$6                             |
| 14 | MONGOLIA       | 2      | \$12                  | \$6                             |
| 15 | CUBA           | 11     | \$77                  | \$7                             |
| 16 | NIGER          | 1      | \$7                   | \$7                             |
| 17 | MOLDOVA        | 1      | \$7                   | \$7                             |
| 18 | HUNGARY        | 15     | \$121                 | \$8                             |
| 19 | UKRAINE        | 11     | \$91                  | \$8                             |
| 20 | ETHIOPIA       | 8      | \$62                  | \$8                             |
| 21 | TAJIKISTAN     | 1      | \$8                   | \$8                             |
| 22 | NEW ZEALAND    | 18     | \$174                 | \$10                            |
| 23 | LITHUANIA      | 4      | \$41                  | \$10                            |
| 24 | KAZAKHSTAN     | 17     | \$184                 | \$11                            |
| 25 | SLOVENIA       | 4      | \$43                  | \$11                            |
| 26 | SERBIA         | 8      | \$98                  | \$12                            |
| 27 | TUNISIA        | 3      | \$43                  | \$14                            |
| 28 | BAHRAIN        | 2      | \$32                  | \$16                            |
| 29 | BULGARIA       | 3      | \$49                  | \$16                            |
| 30 | KOSOVO         | 1      | \$17                  | \$17                            |
| 31 | CZECH REPUBLIC | 10     | \$182                 | \$18                            |
| 32 | DENMARK        | 15     | \$295                 | \$20                            |
| 33 | SLOVAKIA       | 4      | \$87                  | \$22                            |
| 34 | ESTONIA        | 1      | \$23                  | \$23                            |
| 35 | RUSSIA         | 56     | \$1,326               | \$24                            |
| 36 | SOUTH AFRICA   | 10     | \$313                 | \$31                            |
| 37 | GREECE         | 6      | \$195                 | \$33                            |
| 38 | ROMANIA        | 5      | \$178                 | \$36                            |
| 39 | COLOMBIA       | 8      | \$292                 | \$37                            |
| 40 | JORDAN         | 1      | \$38                  | \$38                            |
| 41 | NETHERLANDS    | 19     | \$753                 | \$40                            |
| 42 | GREAT BRITAIN  | 67     | \$2,849               | \$43                            |
| 43 | POLAND         | 11     | \$475                 | \$43                            |

|    |                      | Medals | GDP (in billions USD) | GDP per medal<br>(in billions USD) |
|----|----------------------|--------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 44 | SWEDEN               | 11     | \$493                 | \$45                               |
| 45 | AUSTRALIA            | 29     | \$1,340               | \$46                               |
| 46 | IRAN                 | 8      | \$425                 | \$53                               |
| 47 | FRANCE               | 42     | \$2,422               | \$58                               |
| 48 | MALAYSIA             | 5      | \$296                 | \$59                               |
| 49 | ITALY                | 28     | \$1,815               | \$65                               |
| 50 | SOUTH KOREA          | 21     | \$1,378               | \$66                               |
| 51 | THAILAND             | 6      | \$395                 | \$66                               |
| 52 | DOMINICAN REPUBLIC   | 1      | \$67                  | \$67                               |
| 53 | CANADA               | 22     | \$1,551               | \$70                               |
| 54 | SPAIN                | 17     | \$1,199               | \$71                               |
| 55 | BELGIUM              | 6      | \$454                 | \$76                               |
| 56 | GERMANY              | 42     | \$3,356               | \$80                               |
| 57 | ALGERIA              | 2      | \$167                 | \$83                               |
| 58 | TURKEY               | 8      | \$718                 | \$90                               |
| 59 | BRAZIL               | 19     | \$1,775               | \$93                               |
| 60 | SWITZERLAND          | 7      | \$665                 | \$95                               |
| 61 | VIETNAM              | 2      | \$194                 | \$97                               |
| 62 | NORWAY               | 4      | \$388                 | \$97                               |
| 63 | MOROCCO              | 1      | \$100                 | \$100                              |
| 64 | JAPAN                | 41     | \$4,123               | \$101                              |
| 65 | PUERTO RICO          | 1      | \$103                 | \$103                              |
| 66 | EGYPT                | 3      | \$331                 | \$110                              |
| 67 | IRELAND              | 2      | \$238                 | \$119                              |
| 68 | VENEZUELA            | 3      | \$371                 | \$124                              |
| 69 | ARGENTINA            | 4      | \$548                 | \$137                              |
| 70 | UNITED STATES        | 121    | \$17,947              | \$148                              |
| 71 | ISRAEL               | 2      | \$296                 | \$148                              |
| 72 | CHINA                | 70     | \$10,866              | \$155                              |
| 73 | QATAR                | 1      | \$167                 | \$167                              |
| 74 | PORTUGAL             | 1      | \$199                 | \$199                              |
| 75 | MEXICO               | 5      | \$1,144               | \$229                              |
| 76 | FINLAND              | 1      | \$230                 | \$230                              |
| 77 | INDONESIA            | 3      | \$862                 | \$287                              |
| 78 | PHILIPPINES          | 1      | \$292                 | \$292                              |
| 79 | SINGAPORE            | 1      | \$293                 | \$293                              |
| 80 | CHINESE TAIPEI       | 3      | \$1,099               | \$366                              |
| 81 | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES | 1      | \$370                 | \$370                              |
| 82 | AUSTRIA              | 1      | \$374                 | \$374                              |
| 83 | NIGERIA              | 1      | \$481                 | \$481                              |
| 84 | INDIA                | 2      | \$2,074               | \$1,037                            |

## Appendix 6: Rio 2016 Paralympic Games Performances

| Athletics                            | Event                                    | Result             |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Jason Smyth                          | Men's 100m T13                           | Gold               |
| Michael McKillop                     | Men's 1500m T37                          | Gold               |
| Orla Barry                           | Women's discus F57                       | Silver             |
| Niamh McCarthy                       | Women's discus F41                       | Silver             |
| Noelle Lenihan                       | Women's discus F38                       | Bronze             |
| Orla Comerford                       | Women's 100m - T13                       | 8th Overall        |
| Greta Streimikyte                    | Women's 1500m - T13                      | 4th Overall        |
| Deirdre Mongan                       | Women's Shot Put - F53                   | 6th Overall*       |
| Paul Keogan                          | Men's 400m - T37                         | DSQ Round 1 Heat 1 |
| Patrick Monahan                      | Men's Marathon - T54                     | 16th Overall       |
| Canoeing                             | Event                                    | Result             |
| Patrick O'Leary                      | Men's KL3                                | 6th Overall*       |
| Cycling                              | Event                                    | Result             |
| Eoghan Clifford                      | Men's individual pursuit C3              | Bronze             |
| Eoghan Clifford                      | Men's time trial C3                      | Gold               |
| Katie-George Dunlevy & Eve McCrystal | Women's 1 km time trial B                | Gold               |
| Colin Lynch                          | Men's time trial C2                      | Silver             |
| Katie-George Dunlevy & Eve McCrystal | Women's road race B                      | Silver             |
| Damien Vereker & Sean Hahessy        | Men's Road Time Trial B                  | 6th Overall        |
| Eoghan Clifford                      | Men's Road Race C1-2-3                   | 5th Overall        |
| Damien Vereker & Sean Hahessy        | Men's Track B 1000m Time Trial           | 8th Overall        |
| Colin Lynch                          | Men's Track C2 3000m Individual Pursuit  | 5th Overall        |
| Damien Vereker & Sean Hahessy        | Men's Track B 4000m Individual Pursuit   | 8th Overall        |
| Katie-George Dunlevy & Eve McCrystal | Women's Track B 3000m Individual Pursuit | 5th Overall        |
| Katie-George Dunlevy & Eve McCrystal | Women's Track B 1000m Time Trial         | 7th Overall        |
| Declan Slevin                        | Men's Road Race H3                       | 9th Overall        |
| Declan Slevin                        | Men's Time Trial H3                      | 11th Overall       |
| Colin Lynch                          | Men's Road Race C1-2-3                   | 24th Overall       |
| Peter Ryan                           | Men's Road Race B                        | 12th Overall       |
| Peter Ryan                           | Men's Time Trial B                       | 17th Overall       |
| Damien Vereker & Sean Hahessy        | Men's Road Race B                        | DNF                |
| Ciara Staunton                       | Women's Time Trial H1-2-3                | 14th Overall       |
| Ciara Staunton                       | Women's Road Race H1-2-3-4               | 14th -Lapped       |
| Equestrian                           | Event                                    | Result             |
| Helen Kearney                        | Individual Championship Test             | 12th Overall       |

| Football  | Event                                | Result   |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Team Ireland</b>                                 | Men's 7-a-side Football              | 8th Overall - lost 3 group matches (v Ukraine, v Brazil, v GB), won classification match (v USA) |
| Sailing   | Event                                | Result   |
| <b>Ian Costelloe, Austin O'Carroll, John Twomey</b> | 3-Person Keelboat (Sonar)            | 13th Overall   |
| Shooting  | Event                                | Result   |
| <b>Sean Baldwin</b>                                 | Men's 10m Air Rifle Standing SH1     | 19th Overall   |
| <b>Sean Baldwin</b>                                 | Mixed 10m Air Rifle Prone SH1        | 33rd Overall   |
| <b>Sean Baldwin</b>                                 | Mixed 50m Rifle Prone SH1            | 29th Overall   |
| <b>Sean Baldwin</b>                                 | Men's 50m Rifle 3 Positions SH1      | 20th Overall   |
| <b>Phil Eaglesham</b>                               | Mixed 10m Air Rifle Prone SH2        | 30th Overall   |
| Swimming  | Event                                | Result   |
| <b>Ellen Keane</b>                                  | Women's 100 metre breaststroke SB8   | Bronze   |
| <b>James Scully</b>                                 | Men's 100m Freestyle - S5            | 7th Overall  |
| <b>James Scully</b>                                 | Men's 200m Freestyle - S5            | 6th Overall  |
| <b>Nicole Turner</b>                                | Women's 50m Freestyle - S6           | 7th Overall  |
| <b>Nicole Turner</b>                                | Women's 400m Freestyle - S6          | 8th Overall  |
| <b>Nicole Turner</b>                                | Women's 100m Breaststroke - SB6      | 7th Overall  |
| <b>Nicole Turner</b>                                | Women's 50m Butterfly - S6           | 5th Overall  |
| <b>Nicole Turner</b>                                | Women's 200m Individual Medley - SM6 | 7th Overall  |
| <b>Ellen Keane</b>                                  | Women's 100m Backstroke - S9         | 8th Overall  |
| <b>Ellen Keane</b>                                  | Women's 100m Butterfly - S9          | 8th Overall  |
| <b>Ailbhe Kelly</b>                                 | Women's 100m Freestyle - S8          | Heats  |
| <b>Ailbhe Kelly</b>                                 | Women's 400m Freestyle - S8          | Heats  |
| <b>Ailbhe Kelly</b>                                 | Women's 100m Backstroke - S8         | Heats  |
| <b>Ellen Keane</b>                                  | Women's 200m Individual Medley - SM9 | Heats  |
| Table Tennis  | Event                                | Result   |
| <b>Rena McCarron Rooney</b>                         | Women's Singles - Classes 1-2        | Joint 5th Overall (Qtr Final - won 1 group game)   |
| Triathlon   | Event                                | Result   |
| <b>Catherine Walsh &amp; Francine Meehan</b>        | Women - Para-Triathlon               | 8th Overall*   |

## Appendix 7: Rio 2016 Paralympic Games Medal Table

|                      | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |                         | Gold | Silver | Bronze | Total |
|----------------------|------|--------|--------|-------|-------------------------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1 CHINA              | 107  | 81     | 51     | 239   | 44 LITHUANIA            | 2    | 1      | 0      | 3     |
| 2 GREAT BRITAIN      | 64   | 39     | 44     | 147   | 45 LATVIA               | 2    | 0      | 2      | 4     |
| 3 UKRAINE            | 41   | 37     | 39     | 117   | 46 SINGAPORE            | 2    | 0      | 1      | 3     |
| 4 UNITED STATES      | 40   | 44     | 31     | 115   | 47 HUNGARY              | 1    | 8      | 9      | 18    |
| 5 AUSTRALIA          | 22   | 30     | 29     | 81    | 48 AZERBAIJAN           | 1    | 8      | 2      | 11    |
| 6 GERMANY            | 18   | 25     | 14     | 57    | 49 SWEDEN               | 1    | 4      | 5      | 10    |
| 7 NETHERLANDS        | 17   | 19     | 26     | 62    | 50 AUSTRIA              | 1    | 4      | 4      | 9     |
| 8 BRAZIL             | 14   | 29     | 29     | 72    | 51 CZECH REPUBLIC       | 1    | 2      | 4      | 7     |
| 9 ITALY              | 10   | 14     | 15     | 39    | 51 DENMARK              | 1    | 2      | 4      | 7     |
| 10 POLAND            | 9    | 18     | 12     | 39    | 53 NAMIBIA              | 1    | 2      | 2      | 5     |
| 11 SPAIN             | 9    | 14     | 8      | 31    | 54 ARGENTINA            | 1    | 1      | 3      | 5     |
| 12 FRANCE            | 9    | 5      | 14     | 28    | 55 VIETNAM              | 1    | 1      | 2      | 4     |
| 13 NEW ZEALAND       | 9    | 5      | 7      | 21    | 56 FINLAND              | 1    | 1      | 1      | 3     |
| 14 CANADA            | 8    | 10     | 11     | 29    | 56 TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  | 1    | 1      | 1      | 3     |
| 15 IRAN              | 8    | 9      | 7      | 24    | 58 KAZAKHSTAN           | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| 16 UZBEKISTAN        | 8    | 6      | 17     | 31    | 58 SLOVENIA             | 1    | 1      | 0      | 2     |
| 17 NIGERIA           | 8    | 2      | 2      | 12    | 60 BAHRAIN              | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| 18 CUBA              | 8    | 1      | 6      | 15    | 60 BULGARIA             | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| 19 BELARUS           | 8    | 0      | 2      | 10    | 60 GEORGIA              | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| 20 REPUBLIC OF KOREA | 7    | 11     | 17     | 35    | 60 KUWAIT               | 1    | 0      | 0      | 1     |
| 21 TUNISIA           | 7    | 6      | 6      | 19    | 64 JAPAN                | 0    | 10     | 14     | 24    |
| 22 SOUTH AFRICA      | 7    | 6      | 4      | 17    | 65 VENEZUELA            | 0    | 3      | 3      | 6     |
| 23 THAILAND          | 6    | 6      | 6      | 18    | 66 JORDAN               | 0    | 2      | 1      | 3     |
| 24 GREECE            | 5    | 4      | 4      | 13    | 67 QATAR                | 0    | 2      | 0      | 2     |
| 25 BELGIUM           | 5    | 3      | 3      | 11    | 68 TAIPEI (CN TAIPEI)   | 0    | 1      | 1      | 2     |
| 25 SLOVAKIA          | 5    | 3      | 3      | 11    | 69 BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA | 0    | 1      | 0      | 1     |
| 27 ALGERIA           | 4    | 5      | 7      | 16    | 69 CÔTE D'IVOIRE        | 0    | 1      | 0      | 1     |
| 28 IRELAND           | 4    | 4      | 3      | 11    | 69 ETHIOPIA             | 0    | 1      | 0      | 1     |
| 29 MEXICO            | 4    | 2      | 9      | 15    | 69 UGANDA               | 0    | 1      | 0      | 1     |
| 30 EGYPT             | 3    | 5      | 4      | 12    | 73 PORTUGAL             | 0    | 0      | 4      | 4     |
| 31 SERBIA            | 3    | 2      | 4      | 9     | 74 ISRAEL               | 0    | 0      | 3      | 3     |
| 32 NORWAY            | 3    | 2      | 3      | 8     | 75 MONGOLIA             | 0    | 0      | 2      | 2     |
| 33 MOROCCO           | 3    | 2      | 2      | 7     | 76 CAPE VERDE           | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
| 34 TURKEY            | 3    | 1      | 5      | 9     | 76 INDONESIA            | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
| 35 KENYA             | 3    | 1      | 2      | 6     | 76 SAUDI ARABIA         | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
| 36 MALAYSIA          | 3    | 0      | 1      | 4     | 76 MOZAMBIQUE           | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
| 37 COLOMBIA          | 2    | 5      | 10     | 17    | 76 PAKISTAN             | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
| 38 UA EMIRATES       | 2    | 4      | 1      | 7     | 76 PHILIPPINES          | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
| 39 IRAQ              | 2    | 3      | 0      | 5     | 76 ROMANIA              | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
| 40 HONG KONG, CHINA  | 2    | 2      | 2      | 6     | 76 SRI LANKA            | 0    | 0      | 1      | 1     |
| 41 CROATIA           | 2    | 2      | 1      | 5     |                         |      |        |        |       |
| 41 SWITZERLAND       | 2    | 2      | 1      | 5     |                         |      |        |        |       |
| 43 INDIA             | 2    | 1      | 1      | 4     |                         |      |        |        |       |





SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND

# Consolidated Recommendations

## OVERALL HP SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Using this review process, and based on the evolution seen over the last Olympic cycles, **complete an audit of all HP systems and a review of current HP policy and determine whether the current system is optimal for the next cycles.** Through this determine what is a good investment for Ireland, and where the differentiating factors lie between the NGBs (i.e. governance, critical mass of athletes, etc.). Ask what we want to achieve as a sporting nation and what is our definition of world-class success, and through that process define where our ambition lies.
2. Develop a **multi-cycle strategy (8 years+)** that robustly focuses on the sports with the **potential to deliver the best outcomes, based on the data derived from the audit.** This strategic planning needs to involve all stakeholders (sports, government, Sport Ireland, Institute) but then Sport Ireland/SII should be given the authority to drive it and deliver it. The targets in this strategy need to be ambitious and measurable, with clearly stated medal targets and outcomes, and the strategy should be broadly communicated to the wider public.
3. The **strategy should be based on a tiered sport system, with a limited number of podium/tier one sports, and below that sports with a development potential.** This tiered sport system must be appropriate to Ireland and devised by and for Ireland. Those **HP sports should be evaluated continuously by a Performance Evaluations team,** with sanction for underperformance, and governance being a critical performance criterion. Authority should be given to the HP leadership to make and deliver decisions based on the strategy and performance evaluation, rather than any political consideration.
4. **Government must invest in a more meaningful way against HP sport, based on this strategy,** and invest current spend on a scale appropriate for the ambition. Corporate Ireland needs to get behind investment in HP sport and **commercial models should be explored** to make sports less fully reliant on state funding.
5. The **role of the Sport Ireland Institute should be developed, with resource put into the Sport Ireland Institute, specifically into the areas of Performance Evaluation, (Athlete) Talent ID, and (Coaching/PD) Talent Development,** whilst continuing to support and expand current services. The SII needs to prove that it is an evidence-driven organization, challenging the system, whilst supporting the athletes and coaches, and proving the worth of the HP investment.
6. A **national athlete Talent ID programme should be developed** to identify athlete cross-sport potential and to build talent pipelines across a number of sports.
7. Consideration should be given to **HP training for Boards,** to broaden understanding between Boards and HP team.
8. Thought should be given to **best methods/forums for ongoing consultation between government, its agencies, the sports, and Sport NI/SINI,** so as to maintain strong relationships and clarity of purpose.

## ATHLETICS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Retain the PD model and appoint as soon as possible to drive the performance programme forward and avoid the development of a vacuum.
2. Continue with and build on the HP framework set up by the current PD. This framework needs time and careful management to reach its full potential and become a truly high performing system across all areas.
3. Continue to target disciplines which have been identified as most likely to yield medals for Ireland at a high performance level.
4. Conduct a review of coaching which will lead to the development of a strong high performance coaching framework building on the network concept.
  - Drive a coach development and mentoring agenda with a lead person in each discipline who will drive their area within the overall framework. This person should have the expertise to mentor and facilitate elite coach development rather than directly coaching themselves.
  - Create a CPD element with a strong recognition system (e.g. credits) for engagement with the Coaching Network.
  - Update the coaching section of the website as part of the new coaching framework where coaches' achievements are recognised and athletes can search for high performance coaches in specific disciplines and locations.
5. Develop a clear communication structure for the PD position and HP Lead Team including phone contact and home programme visits so that athletes have clear expectations of their interaction with the PD and other members of the HP Team.
6. Continue with providing consistency of support to athletes at camps and championships.
7. Maintain and expand the services hub at the Sport Ireland Institute
  - Agree service level agreements with targeted service providers as early as possible to ensure continuity of service to athletes.
  - Work with the Sport Ireland Institute to agree protocols and leadership of the joint services group
  - Use the hub as a base for development one day camps to instil early familiarity and positive athlete behaviours
  - Host coach network sessions at the Sport Ireland Institute (when appropriate) to build familiarity and facilitate engagement
8. Instigate a training camps programme throughout the cycle targeting athletes who are likely to qualify for the Games. Where possible (different event demands permitting) operate this on a multi-discipline basis to strengthen athlete and coach engagement, sense of belonging and maximise delivery of support services.
9. Implement a post Championships debrief plan designed to establish a culture of on-going review from an individual and programme perspective.
10. Retain the HP website as a reference tool for athletes but revamp to make it more attractive and user friendly to athletes.
11. Consider reviewing carding allocations at the Emerging Talent level to focus more on performance testing rather than performance outcomes. Provide support to athletes achieving the standards through investing in one day camps for athletes and coaches or other programme elements rather than small allocations of direct financial support to a large number of athletes.
12. Review Memorandum and Articles ensuring that they reflect the current professionalism and operation of the organisation.
13. Through the course of the on-going governance review consider the position of the Coaching Committee and its relationship with HP.

**Non-Athletics specific recommendations:**

1. Include an athlete lifestyle support practitioner as part of the Tokyo 2020 team to begin the post Games support immediately after competition. Ideally this person should be involved in the programme with the majority of athletes pre Games.
2. Ensure the Olympic Games rooming strategy includes a cross sport agreement on moving people to support those athletes who are competing later in the competition programme.

**BADMINTON RECOMMENDATIONS****HP Strategy**

1. Define early what Badminton Ireland is aiming for at the Olympics (2020 and 2024) and communicate that throughout the organisation and externally. Define how long it will take for the pathway to deliver medals and in what categories. Use other external resources available (Sport Ireland Institute, other NGBs, etc.) to assist in that definition process.

**Governance**

2. Recruit a further one or two external members to the Board, based on specific skillsets, and ideally with HP knowledge and experience. This should further enrich the knowledge and contact base of Badminton Ireland and expose it to further opportunities, including commercial contacts.
3. Organise on an annual basis that the Board members meet the HP athletes and Olympians, and get to know them, understand their experiences through the HP programme, at the Olympics etc. Currently there is no interfacing and this would be enriching for both sides.
4. Develop and put forward a proposal on why Ireland should move to a four-year funding cycle and make that part of Badminton Ireland's communications and public affairs strategy.

**Professional Development**

5. Look at ways of improving the career path within the NGB, so that there are clear pathways for retention and development, whether through investment in paid external education, leadership courses, external mentoring programmes, secondment to the international federation, etc.

**Commercial/Participation**

6. Explore ways to exploit the family friendly element of badminton, i.e. that it can be played by young/old, male/female, and develop a strategy to commercialise that idea. Seek commercial partners who can work with Badminton Ireland to monetize that programme, and use those funds to invest back into the early stages of the pipeline.

**HP Programme**

7. Explore opportunities to work with Universities and academic centres to invest in the data and performance analysis tools required by Badminton Ireland, and for the University/ Academic centre to sponsor and own those tools together with Badminton Ireland. Seek where possible any alternative funding sources for those tools (e.g. Ireland Funds, National Lottery, EU programmes, etc.)
8. With sparring the standout item on the HP programme, look at opportunities for alternative funding sources for this area, including those outlined above, as well as commercial programme partners, education programme partners, etc.

## CYCLING RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made here are presented with a view to assisting and supporting Cycling Ireland in their aspirations to improve an already highly functioning High Performance Programme. Much of the HP Programme delivery is of the highest standard and consistently produces world-class performances. The focus of this section is to propose where and how performance gains might be achieved.

The majority of recommendations that were proposed in the 2013 Review have been addressed, however, recommendations made in this report consonant with those proposed in 2013 should prompt a reassessment of the progress made in each instance.

### 1. The Technical Director should resume the role of High Performance Head Coach

All evidence revealed in this review suggests that the current Technical Director delivers a high level of coaching competency. The Head Coach role should have a clear remit determined by the Board and CEO, but should include the primary strategic responsibility of the High Performance Programme. The Head Coach should be accountable to the CEO where renewed role clarity will stipulate appropriate 'Check & Challenge'.

### 2. Cycling Ireland should consider recruiting a High Performance Team Manager

The HP Team Manager role should have a clear remit including primary reporting, budgetary, administrative and logistical responsibility. A similar role that focused on the administrative and logistical demands in the Paralympic Programme worked well, however, this new role should be a full-time paid post with responsibility for both Olympic and Paralympic HP Programmes. The Team Manager should regularly report directly to the Board and CEO.

### 3. The Head Coach and Team Manager positions, should together replace the current position of Technical Director

The recommendations are intended to protect and enhance what is best about current delivery within the HP Programme whilst addressing and improving the facets required to effectively support successful delivery. It is important to stress that only the concomitant implementation of should be considered.

### 4. High Performance strategy design should be expertise led

- The Board of Cycling Ireland has overall strategic, governance and policy-making responsibility for the entire organisation. It is accountable to its members and investors and is responsible for the design and delivery of the 2015-2019 Cycling Ireland Corporate Strategy
- The design and delivery of the HP Strategy should be the sole responsibility of the CI High Performance staff, provided said strategy aligns with the overall Cycling Ireland Corporate Strategy. The HP Strategy, including rationale, should be clearly communicated to the Board. Monitoring and evaluation of the delivery of the HP Strategy, should be measured against clearly defined and agreed targets. This will help to protect the integrity of the Board's commitment to its members, the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and securely sanction the strategic autonomy of the High Performance Programme to the High Performance Staff
- The High Performance Staff should identify and set a series of annual performance targets, agreed by the Board, targeting success at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic & Paralympic Games. Clearly communicated targets and rationale will encourage investment in the

HP Programme by all the relevant stakeholders (athletes, coaches, support staff, Cycling Ireland Board and funding partners) and confirm that the programme delivery is on course.

#### 5. Increased Coaching Capacity

Coaching capacity has been reduced since the Junior/Development Coach position was vacated and not replaced. The demand for an increased coaching capacity is already pronounced in a system that weighs heavily on volunteer expertise and where demand has exceeded capacity for a prolonged period. Cycling Ireland should consider recruiting additional Coaching Staff as a matter of priority.

#### 6. Physical Training Environment

Cycling Ireland should maintain its HP Training Base in Majorca whilst continuing to explore all possible avenues for the development of a fit for purpose velodrome in Ireland.

## ILGU - RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are my recommendations:

1. Define what the CGI is aiming for at the Olympics in terms of women's golf (2020 and 2024) and communicate that throughout the organisation and externally. Define how long it will take for the pathway to deliver medals and in what categories (if the IOC introduce mixed golf, for example). Use other external resources available (Sport Ireland Institute, other NGBs, etc.) to assist in that definition process.
2. Review regional coaching HP system to ensure that it really is coaching those with genuine high potential. Clearly define the development programme parameters – specifically, introduce and enforce age caps and handicap limits for coaching at district/regional level. Publish these parameters on the website so that it is clear for all involved.
3. Introduce further clarity around the player review process. Explain and clarify the player review process to parents and make the selection criteria obvious so that there can be no confusion between a review/lessons learned process, and selection disappointment. Publish the parameters of the player review process on the website.
4. Clearly delineate between the national system and the world class system and communicate those delineations publicly. A world-class high performance programme should be criteria based, and naturally self-selecting. Decide on a future role for selectors and at what level they should be involved – junior/ladies/senior – if at all. Define when a selection decision rests with the High Performance Manager and make that definition and the programme definition public knowledge.
4. Work hard to align the Board and the HP Programme, specifically undertaking the following activities:
  - Educate the Board on what constitutes High Performance, through the introduction of external speakers to present to the Board (e.g. Sport Ireland Institute staff) and invite the HP service providers to speak to the board on their areas of expertise e.g. sports psychology, S&C, etc.

- At times allow staff to deliver reports on their area directly to the Board, specifically allowing the HP Manager (or HP management team) to report to the Board on a regular basis.
- If there is to be a HP Director on the Board, give them a clearly defined title and written role description, outlining the strategic and support nature of their role (as distinct from operations), and giving them an induction with the HP team.
- Provide clarity on titles, specifically communicating that the head of the HP programme is the Executive Director of the programme and that any HP Board Director is a Non-Executive Director (and thus does not have final say on programme decisions).
- Provide clarity on the role of HP within the golf ecosystem e.g. aspiration value of visible players can drive participation.
- Seek to implement the National Governance Code, including a change of rules to allow men and non-golfers to serve on the Board. This will open up the Board to external influence, and with that possibly broader ideas, a greater contact base, broader decision making, etc. Invite an external recruit with high performance expertise to join the Board.
- Refine the mandate of the HP Committee to improve its functioning, speed and ability. Reduce the number of people on the Committee. Ensure that all on the Committee are aligned on the performance mandate of the HP programme, have experience/knowledge of HP, and are comfortable with taking difficult decisions. Set up a regular meeting of that committee, which always takes place in person or by phone/skype at the same time (e.g. First Monday of every month at 0900), and has a clear agenda.
- Work on people management including a more formalised and documented review process for coaching and HP staff and ensuring progression opportunities for staff and staff retention. Provide clarity to all staff around roles and process.

## GUI - RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are my recommendations:

### HP Strategy

1. Define what the CGI is aiming for at the Olympics in terms of men's golf (2020 and 2024) and communicate that throughout the organisation and externally. Define how long it will take for the pathway to deliver medals and in what categories (if the IOC introduce mixed golf, for example). Use other external resources available (Sport Ireland Institute, other NGBs, etc.) to assist in that definition process.

### HP Programme

2. Continue to implement the recommendations of the Strawman, as per the process already underway. In so doing, also review the level and usage of support services along the HP pathway. Look at the opportunities for informal based learning, and integrating mentorship and informal coaching into the programmes. Assess what services could have an impact for the confirmed talent and HP programme players, their coaches, and parents.
3. Formalise the HP committee/leadership group around the leads in the restructured HP programme, with regular scheduled meetings, meeting agenda, and report structure. Communicate the HP committee/leadership group structure and role throughout the organization, to the Board and to the coaches, support staff and athletes. Define scope and decision making process of the HP committee/leadership group. (Note that there should be only one such group, whether called the HP Committee or HP Strategic Leadership Group, with title less relevant than form, structure and process of that group).

### Governance

4. Seek to implement the National Governance Code at Board level. The goal should be to become more competence based, rather than representation based. This will open up the Board to external influence, and with that possibly broader ideas, a greater contact base, broader decision making, etc.
5. Invite an external recruit with high performance expertise to join the Board.

## GYMNASTICS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. With the NGTC coming on stream as a resource for GI in the new year, the usage arrangements and intended plans for how clubs and performance athletes will use the facility are well thought through. The intention to produce more performance athletes who can consistently represent Ireland at major youth, age group and senior age international gymnastics competitions is clear. **Whilst Olympic performances will take media and public attention, they are not the only markers of success and care should be taken not to assume Olympic success is the only appropriate performance indicator**, though GI is confident that consistent Olympic qualification and representation should be achieved in the future.
2. For the sport to continue its improvement (one athlete at London, two athletes at Rio), an alternative funding model will be required. The stipends made available to the athletes during this Olympic cycle were very modest and required significant personal monetary investment to train, to live, to compete and despite these challenges, two athletes qualified. If GI is to reach its potential in the future, a more comprehensive funding model will be required. Having elite athletes supported with 5,000–12,000 Euros per year is challenging and the sport will have to decide how to supplement this if the circa 150,000 Euros over four years is all that is available for performance sport. With a membership of approximately 20,000 gymnasts across Ireland, it might be expected that GI could expect greater Sport Ireland support. Figures in the region of 300,000–500,000 per year seem much more reasonable if the sport is to achieve its Strategic Plan objectives. However, no sport should assume that performance sport should be fully funded by government. **The diversification of funding streams including sponsorship, NGB input and philanthropy should all be pursued as part of a multi layered funding model** for all sports, all of which GI is actively developing.
3. The sport benefits by having some internationally ranked Judges who have performed at Olympic, World and European level. These Judges have been hugely beneficial in bringing back to GI changes to the 'code' for judging in gymnastics and by participation in the international body (FIG) have been empowered to exercise influence on how the code might change. This enables GI to have some influence on the international governing body, but more importantly **allows the athletes and coaches early access to impending changes to the rules governing how points are scored in elite competition**.
4. There are some concerns about **how the performance athletes can have access to the range of services provided through the Sport Ireland Institute**, though this seems to be more related to the training base used by athletes, who hitherto now have lived and trained in England rather than Ireland due to training facilities and access to high level coaching. This was particularly noted for medical support, which in a sport like gymnastics is crucial.

## HOCKEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Governance

- Align Hockey Ireland's vision with Sport Ireland and the Olympic Council of Ireland with regard to the requirements of a high performance team sport
- Improve awareness at Board level regarding the demands of High Performance
- Examine the possibility of improving communication between the Board and the High Performance Programme
- Consider the possibility of including player representatives in strategic decision making around high performance
- Source more funding and sponsorship to drive the High Performance Programmes
- The Board should become the primary driver in fund raising while using the high performance players as a support mechanism
- Examine the possibility of marketing hockey more through the use of social media to promote the game, particularly around important tournaments
- Examine the possibility of drawing more on volunteer support from within Hockey Ireland

### 2. High Performance Strategy

- Appoint a High Performance Director to manage all aspect of high performance which also includes communicating regularly with the Board regarding on-going progress and developments within the High Performance Programme
- Develop a four-year strategic plan for the Olympic Cycle with specific goals for each block of the programme
- Create more contact time between the players and coaches in the form of squad assemblies and test games
- Continue to improve communication within the HP Programme and with the Board
- Develop a policy decision with regard to international players advancing their hockey careers through playing professionally overseas or remaining within the domestic game in Ireland
- Examine the possibility of engaging with and building relationships between Hockey Ireland and the employers of home based international players

### 3. High Performance Investment

- Avail of continued and on-going support from the Sport Ireland and the Sports Institute of Northern Ireland
- Examine the possibility of Carding home based players if qualification for Tokyo is successful
- Supply more specialist coaches to both Men's and Women's Programmes
- Supply more support staff on an ongoing basis to both the Men's and Women's Programmes in the form of S&C, Sports Psychology, Nutrition and Lifestyle Management

### 4. Management

- Improve planning efficiency around high performance in order to minimise adjustments to the programme
- Review the development of Player Culture and the Senior Player groups
- Further examine the cause of the erosion of Team Culture during the Olympic Tournament
- Ensure continued engagement by the coaches with the Player Leadership Groups
- Set up timely feedback channels between management and players well ahead of tournament games

## 5. Coaching

- Schedule more assembly time for the Men's and Women's programmes and specifically more test games against high level opposition
- Employ more specialist coaches to spread the workload of the coaching staff
- Utilise more support staff on an ongoing basis in S&C, Sports Psychology and Lifestyle
- Use assembly time to develop team culture and hardwire tactical strategies in advance of major tournaments

## HORSE SPORT IRELAND RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Contact the riders as soon as possible to explain the current position of their programmes to ensure confidence in the continuation of support and provision.
2. Develop an overarching high performance strategy for Horse Sport in Ireland incorporating Olympic and Paralympic disciplines ensuring that HP Para-Dressage sits within the HSI HP framework.
3. Implement a Performance Director model within Eventing and Showjumping and consider a combined role across Dressage and Para-Dressage. The PD should have oversight of the entire performance pathway with clear reporting lines and autonomy over their agreed performance budget.
4. Identify the expected costs of the four year programme to Tokyo 2020 including expected travel costs associated with WEG 2018 and the new appointments recommended above to ensure programmes can be executed successfully.
5. Following the PD appointments conduct a review of all role specs across the system to ensure that they reflect the current set up and reporting structure.
6. Review the membership of the High Performance Committees and consider strengthening them with additional external sport performance expertise
7. Investigate the development of a rider support programme with the Sport Ireland Institute specifically designed for the uniqueness of horse sport.
8. Promote programme engagement through initiatives such as:
  - Implementing a system of continuous review that includes feedback from everyone involved in the relevant programme.
  - Involving relevant stakeholders in performance planning.
  - Including riders in the development of rider agreements.
  - Developing a sense of Irish team identity among owners.
9. Supplement OCI team member agreements with HSI specific elements such as expectations around accreditations and team member behaviour including an alcohol ban prior to competition and when wearing team kit.
10. Review the current investment strategy targeting specific programme elements which are suitable for direct sponsorship.

### Non Horse Sport specific recommendations:

1. OCI to consider more initiatives to promote a sense of Irish Olympic Team identity for Tokyo 2020.

## BOXING RECOMMENDATIONS

This is a summary of the recommendations outlined within the review:

1. Set a target for Tokyo 2020 to be within the Top 3 countries in terms of numbers of boxers qualified and set an ambition to qualify a boxer in every available weight category.
2. Re-commit to the goal of 5th (in London) to 1st in the World in the future and use this to continually challenge every aspect of the High Performance programme to ensure World Class standards apply throughout.
3. Appoint an experienced and qualified High Performance Director to lead the programme, separate to the role of Head Coach.
4. Establish a revised organisation structure for the core High Performance Programme Team. The core team should consist of:
  - Performance Director (with overall responsibility for the vision, strategy, plan and operations of the programme);
  - Head Coach (with overall responsibility for the lead in terms of technical and tactical coaching across the programme);
  - High Performance Coaches (working with Senior & Junior Men's and Women's squads)
  - High Performance Administration Manager (supporting the team on all operational matters across the programme);
  - The core High Performance team will be supplemented with Pool Coaches based on the demand of the programme at any point in time.

The Performance Director will have direct line management responsibility for all staff within the programme including the Head Coach, High Performance Coaches, High Performance Administration manager and Pool Coaches. The Performance Director will report directly to the CEO.
5. The High Performance Programme, under the leadership of an experienced and qualified High Performance Director, should have full autonomy for all elements of the programme including management of the Board approved budget and finances assigned to the programme, selection of squads and athletes participating in the programme and disciplinary issues of participants within the programme.
6. No member of the High Performance Coaching Team should act in the corner of a boxer in the National Championships.
7. Establish a High Performance Advisory Board (HPAB) to act as an oversight body, a sounding board for and to provide advice and challenge to the High Performance Programme. For further detail on the make-up and structure see Section 4.4 above.
8. The High Performance Programme should adopt a stricter monitoring and control of weight management across the athletes within the programme. Boxers should be managed in a controlled way to maintain an agreed target weight limit (e.g. within 5% of their fighting weight) on an ongoing basis.
9. Formalise the boxer code of conduct and commit to a 'back to basics' philosophy to re-establish a strong high performance culture and set of behaviours across the programme.

10. The High Performance Programme should develop a scale of disciplinary offences based on the code of conduct and be empowered to discipline boxers for breaches as appropriate. In the case of the most serious level of breach the High Performance Advisory Board will conduct a disciplinary hearing and determine the appropriate sanction.
11. Ensure accurate and up-to-date records of key data relating to each boxer in the programme is maintained within the programme.
12. Appoint a full-time physio to the programme and ensure this service is available at all times when the High Performance squad are in training camp or in competition to guarantee immediate access to and increased quality of service to the athletes.
13. Coaches should take a more hands on approach in directing the input of service providers to ensure that they can deliver their service more effectively.
14. Tailor S&C programmes to the individual needs of each athlete within the programme and expand the range of physiological tests conducted.
15. The High Performance Director should have ultimate responsibility for deciding on the make-up of the support service providers that travel with the team for each competition based on the perceived value/priority of the team and the available budget within the programme for such services.
16. Ensure that performance analysis services are available to coaches in competition, either directly or remotely.
17. Explore the possibility of establishing an innovative partnership with a data analytics company to deliver a world-leading performance analysis capability to the High Performance Programme.
18. Continue the practice of including a niche medical expert in managing cuts within the support team for all major championships.
19. Offer, on a proactive basis, a range of development programmes to athletes to maximise their personal development throughout their participation within the High Performance Unit.
20. The High Performance Director should manage directly and co-ordinate the provision of services by all support providers to the programme. An agreed set of KPIs should be established and monitored closely to ensure quality of service, delivery of agreed outcomes and value for money. Each provider should be challenged to assess their service and how it can be improved heading into the Tokyo cycle.
21. Relocate the High Performance Unit in full to the High Performance Centre at the Sport Ireland Institute in Abbottstown.
22. Ensure that adequate catering arrangements are put in place at Abbottstown to service the requirements of the HP Unit.
23. Examine alternative options for accommodation closer to Abbottstown in the short-term at a similar cost to the existing arrangement with the IABA hotel provider.

24. Explore the optimum long-term solution to provide on-site accommodation and rest & recovery facilities on site at Abbottstown.
25. The role of Team Manager at Olympic Games and other key international events should be assigned to the High Performance Director. In the event the HPD is unable to perform the role of Team Manager for an event, then the role should be appointed by the HPD.
26. Identify past graduates of the High Performance Programme as potential new coaches and focus on their development to attract 'new blood' into the coaching ranks across the HP and provincial programmes.
27. The High Performance Programme should play a role in the development of provincial coaches through education masterclasses, invitations to attend training days/camps and mentoring of coaches.
28. Carry out a feasibility study with a consortium of partners to assess the viability of establishing an Irish based WSB Franchise.
29. Develop a strategy to build confidence in the IABA and High Performance brand and build positive relationships with potential commercial partners.
30. The IABA, led by the CEO, should develop a detailed implementation roadmap outlining the critical path and timetable for change as a result of the Rio Review.

## SAILING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Despite success in winning a medal for sailing, the programme can benefit from changes and developments over the coming four years. The reliance on Sport Ireland funding to underwrite the performance programme is both a strength and a weakness. Work is underway to **diversify income to support the performance programme**. In sports like sailing with significant capital needs, allocating funding on an annual basis is unhelpful. The sport and the athletes would be far more able to launch and deliver credible and performance based campaigns if funding was known over a longer period. All athletes accept the card funded system and are comfortable that funding should follow results, but the dips in continuity have caused some challenges for class campaigns over this period.
2. Funding available over the period has been generous, if considered against other sports of with a similar participation base. However, sailing has a real chance to deliver Olympic medals and success in recent Olympiads demonstrates the plan in place is producing positive results. **Care must be taken by the NGB to remain within their budget allocation, or to consider how difficult decisions might be made to invest in classes with realistic chances of medalling or achieving particular levels of success e.g. top 10 finishes in major events and Olympic competition**. For future cycles however, consideration must be given as to how the ISA can secure available resources to supplement the funding provided through Sport Ireland. Direct NGB investment and OCI support were two areas where the Performance Director was frustrated with the support given.

3. Communication channels in all sports are crucial but can be challenging. Because of the pressures of campaigning, linked with income generating activities, travel and competition, athletes are sometimes not able to communicate freely or easily with the support staff or ISA personnel associated with the performance Programme. This was evident between physio staff and athletes, though **an internet based monitoring and development system is being trialled which if instigated properly will overcome some challenges** evident as a result of athlete's travel needs.
4. The lack of contact between OCI and the NGB is not in itself a problem, but recent circumstances and publicity linked with OCI has not been helpful to Irish sport. All respondents felt over the cycle OCI contact was less than ideal, some having no contact at all. Yet at the point when the Rio pre-performance needs are most critical, the OCI took responsibility for logistics and equipment transfer without any expertise or appropriate interaction with the governing body. Whilst the athletes in this sport were able to reconcile the challenges created by OCI, this is just totally inappropriate. The majority of coaching and support staff felt that the elements of the programme were either "effective" or "very effective". The one exception was the "Overall preparation of the OCI's support" which the majority of responders rated as "ineffective" or "very ineffective".
5. The sport would benefit from **more class competition within Ireland**. This is not easily managed for newer or more expensive classes, but to have only one boat in a class competing from Ireland will result in the athletes having to live away and not be very visible within the country.
7. Post Games preparation was noted as an area of low satisfaction by all groups responding to the survey. However, when questioned this was not something that could be explained easily. It is unclear what expectations were in place, but note was mentioned of unacceptable return air travel arrangements, and errors made in flights which for one class had them booked to leave before their regatta had finished. It will be important for future Olympiads for travel arrangements to be overseen by the NGB, not the OCI.
8. Finally, whilst it may seem minor, many respondents to the survey and all interviewed personnel felt the absence of Team Ireland team building or a proper send off when leaving Dublin was a significant deficit in giving a sense of achievement to represent their country and perform at an Olympiad.

## PARALYMPICS RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations pertain to areas of improvement and enhancement for the Performance Programme leading into Tokyo 2020:

1. The role and duties of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the High Performance Director (HPD), and how they interface at an operational level, needs to balance both accountability and the need for the HPD to have agreed autonomy in matters pertaining to high performance.
2. Performance management of sport department staff, a responsibility of the HPD, needs to ensure that there are high levels of professionalism and accountability at all times. As an operational model this must relate to the overall organisational culture of performance management and professional development.
3. There must be clearly defined performance targets established for the Tokyo cycle with an awareness that participation, while a part of performance, may not be the ultimate aim or the outcome required to justify high performance investment and continued relevance of Para competition.
4. A High Performance Advisory Group, with approved terms of reference should be established by Paralympic Ireland to provide a strategic 'check and challenge' group to support both the CEO and the HPD. This group should contain up to five members, be chaired by the HPD, and include independent high performance expertise.
5. A high performance audit should be carried out to review a range of embedded practices and events (e.g. multi-sport training camps). This should be initiated as a matter of priority as part of the planning process for Tokyo 2020 through the facilitation of the above advisory group and with stakeholder engagement.
6. Subject to the above, and if deemed appropriate, an inter-related and aligned 'whole of system' set of high performance tools should be developed to ensure an aligned direction and collective purpose for PI and NGBs. This will provide clarity and transparency in planning, reporting, decision-making, and allocation of funding and support.
7. A Coaching Tokyo 2020 programme, akin to the PEP programme should be developed or facilitated through PI and/or with support or a targeted partnership with the Sport Ireland Institute. This will provide a long term professional development experience for coaches who will potentially go to Tokyo and/or be supporting athletes aspiring to this, across the cycle.
8. Performance analysis support for coaches and athletes needs to be significantly increased, especially for the qualification phase of the Tokyo cycle, with the opportunity to establish more University partnerships seen as a priority for this area.
9. Increased investment into human resource is urgently required into the Sport Ireland Institute who are currently under-resourced and operating to maximum capacity. This would allow for increased and more flexible servicing of para and able bodied athletes in the key sport science and medicine, i.e. physiotherapy, strength and conditioning, and psychology.
10. All current and/or new sport science and medicine service providers working with para athletes should have clearly defined role descriptions and accountabilities, including individual key performance indicators and how their work contributes to the achievement of athlete performance targets.

11. Medical and physiotherapy services need greater investment and prioritization leading into Tokyo with the appointment of at least two medical Doctors early in the cycle, the identification of a network of physiotherapists and multiple Athlete Service Hubs to support athletes based outside of Dublin in a more coordinated way.
12. A greater emphasis is needs to be placed on nutrition and recovery, with an education programme developed that covers nutrition for optimum performance, preparation, recovery, re-fueling and rehydration.
13. Recovery facilities with a range of therapies needs to be further improved on for Tokyo, with a fully equipped PI recovery suite available to athletes.
14. Paralympic Ireland and NGBs need to continue to lobby Government and Sport Ireland as to the limitations of the existing high performance budget for support and the need to ensure that existing investment and funding schemes deliver performance outcomes.

**The following recommendations pertain to areas of improvement for the Organisation leading into Tokyo 2020:**

15. The mission of Paralympics Ireland is 'Leading elite athletes with a disability to Paralympic Games' and as per the Shared Vision for the Disability Sports Sector in 2025, Paralympics Ireland does not have a role at participation level. Paralympics Ireland must address and agree internally, as a priority, its understanding of elite vs participation, and clearly define what elite means to the organisation. Measurements of success for the next strategic plan (from 2017) and in the Tokyo 2020 pathway plan must underpin and support the mission of the organisation. Those plans must underline and define what 'elite' means to the organisation, and show clear milestones it will achieve along the way of its strategic goals.
16. To support the delivery of the goal of true organisational excellence, Paralympics Ireland should pay for administrative support in the Human Resource area. Through the use of paid external HR support, (e.g. 20 hours a month), it can provide extra man hours to address the areas of organisational growth, management function and planning, team building, reporting structures, career development, debriefs and reviews, inductions and succession planning. The end result of this work should be a solid HR infrastructure and process, led internally and supported externally, with a robust staff support system, and an engaged proactive team.
17. Paralympics Ireland should proceed with weekly management meetings, at a set-time each week. The agenda and duration of this meeting should be clear, and the overall goal being one of operating as a team, with clear communications, and with executive management decisions resting with this team and strategic leadership decisions with the Board. The executive management team should continue to be invited on a regular basis (at a minimum twice per annum) to report directly to the Board.
18. The role of Chef de Mission should become a paid contract role, hired for 18 to 24 months to cover the Games period (and ideally with a handover from the previous Chef de Mission). The existing job description should be reviewed and rewritten to cover the key 6-8 objectives that the Chef de Mission is responsible for. The Chef de Mission should report to the Board on a regular basis closer to the Games time. With a contracted Chef de Mission in place and fully responsible for the logistics and delivery of the games, the HPD could look after the three performance sports of Athletics, Cycling, Swimming, and the Operations Manager look after the remaining sports.

19. Paralympics Ireland should seek to put significant additional resource over the next cycle behind its strategic goal to *'Establish a talent identification model and performance pathway for Irish Paralympic athletes'*. Delivering a centralized world class talent identification and talent transfer programme, as identified in previous strategic planning processes, is likely to be central to building success over future cycles, from 2020 and beyond.

20. When next recruiting new Board Members, Paralympics Ireland should seek to maintain high performance expertise at Board level. High Performance should become a high priority standing item on the monthly Board meeting agenda. There should be frequent direct reporting at Board level from the HPD.

## PENTATHLON RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review the governance structure for high performance. Until such a time as PI meets the criteria to become a recognised NGB it should consider one of the following options:
  - HSI to take a more active role in governance and move to establish a high performance committee for modern pentathlon within its existing framework.
  - Sport Ireland/Sport Ireland Institute assume governance of the high performance athletes with PD reporting directly to them and PI to focus on the development of the participation element of the sport.
2. Retain the PD model and strengthen the coaching team through the appointment of a world class fencing coach and increasing the amount of shooting coaching.
3. Establish a framework that supports the PD through:
  - Mentoring to ensure continuity for the programme.
  - Communication and administrative support plan at particular stress points and periods spent out of the country.
  - Budgetary oversight and financial rigour.
4. For Tokyo 2020 review support needs of the team at Games time and design role specs ensuring that all needs are met.
5. Continue with the multi-disciplinary support team and formalise communication framework and operating procedures for the team focusing on establishing a fully integrated system.
6. Continue relationship with Fencing Ireland at a shared development coaching level and look to increase this to world class level when and if appropriate.
7. Through HSI, formalise links with Pony Club and tetrathlon in line with a clear athlete talent pathway.

### Non Pentathlon specific recommendations:

1. Sport Ireland to consider greater investment in pentathlon pending satisfaction with its governance framework.

## ROWING RECOMMENDATIONS

Without knowing the extent to which funding will change for Rowing Ireland it is difficult to make bold, specific recommendations for the next Olympic cycle and beyond. However, with the Olympic success comes the opportunity to explore commercial partnership funding, as well as being in the position to make a strong case for increased central funding.

The following are a mix of specific recommendations to consider that would require significant funding, but would have important performance impact:

1. Training camps were definitely perceived as highly effective by everyone. The opportunity to train in a specific location and minimal travelling to contend with before being able to refuel and rest is a likely, obvious reason for the quality of work carried out. Additionally, time post-training sessions for discussion/analysis are also not time pressured, so everything allows work/recovery/learning/unity to be enhanced. Given the perceived positive impact of the training camps, great consistency and exploitation of this approach is recommended, with the suggestion that clear training camp objectives are set and evaluated before and after every camp to ensure there is a sense of accountability and a confirmation of value from each block of training. Ensuring these camps are fully supported with physio and medical cover would also maximise the likelihood of impact in the future.
2. Since the training camp impact has been so strong, it would be an important addition to ensure that National Training Camp training is able to benefit from as many of the training camp qualities as possible. A specific way in which this could be achieved is through finding a way to bring high quality nutrition to the NTC, so that immediately after training sessions, athletes are able to refuel with high quality food. This could also serve to keep them being educated about their own food choices, as well as being able to purchase pre-prepared food to take home. Exploring possible commercial relationships with food suppliers and a relationship with a Catering School to set the centre up to develop Chefs would seem like a very practical way forward in this area.
3. Maintaining the training camp theme further, where it is possible to have a training camp at the Tokyo Olympic venue, or a period of time to recce the Olympic venue for the athletes, this would provide an important part of the preparation jigsaw. Timing of this would probably be late 2019, after initial qualification places have been secured. The opportunity to visit the Olympic venue at the beginning of the final push to the Games provides athletes and coaches with a much clearer understanding of the environment they will be competing in and can help to bring greater clarity to the remainder of the training time available. Even if this is a land based training camp, the time spent would be valuable.
4. There is a need to unite the sport science and medicine provision through a single performance filter. It would seem that purchasing some biomechanics equipment for one or two boats would be a powerful mechanism for achieving this unity. The measurement of on-water movement and application of forces provides a singular, case-conferencing focus for athletes/coaches and practitioners to keep solving the problem of increasing on-water speed. Physio and S&C work can be fully focused on functional movement and ensuring bodies are equipped for and delivering that movement. Physiology data that is collected can be used alongside a fuller on-water picture of performance. Psychological work can be focused towards skill acquisition, development and maintenance and if all of this is being used as a collaborative focus between coach/athlete and practitioners, the nature of support starts from having a united problem to solve and data-set to work with, rather than

everyone tackling performance influences they see without a consideration of other areas. The interdisciplinary approach promoted by the on-water data would be a very clear way of ensuring practitioners are truly immersing themselves into the applied challenges of the sport and developing their rowing specific expertise as quickly as possible.

5. On a non-funding related note, we believe that given the success of the Olympics this time around, it is a good time to create an athlete representative role to ensure that there is a regular, formal connection between the athletes and the coaches/PD. Having consistent, regular meetings that focus on proactive communication between athletes and staff would ensure that the joined-up approach we have outlined is being made the most of. Athletes and coaches being able to regularly check-in with how things are going and preparing for what the next phase of training is focused on, will help with building momentum with approaches that are working, as well as being able to identify areas of concern/confusion early and in a collaborative manner. The most important reason for creating an athlete representative is to reinforce that the quest for success is a collaborative effort and not a hierarchical one. Creating an agreed agenda for monthly meetings would help this role work really well and deliver value all round.

## SWIMMING & DIVING RECOMMENDATIONS

**Based on this review the following recommendations are proposed for Swim Ireland to implement**

1. Continue with the existing policy of setting the FINA 'A' Standard for Olympic qualification.
2. Continue with the policy of setting the final qualification event some 2/3 months in advance of the Games to enable sufficient preparation time for qualified athletes.
3. Target the relay event and set a strategy to ensure qualification of at least one relay team for Tokyo 2020.
4. Challenge the High Performance Programme to improve standards in every area of the programme.
5. Implement the new High Performance Strategy approved by the Board of Swim Ireland.
6. Separate the role of Performance Director and Head Coach (in line with the new High Performance Strategy).
7. Develop and resource a long-term Diving High Performance Programme to leverage the success of Rio 2016.
8. Formalise support service provision, especially in-competition physio support, for the Diving programme.
9. Ensure there is a more aligned and closer relationship between the coaches and service providers especially in the area of S&C.
10. Introduce video analysis support services into the High Performance Programme.
11. Identify new areas of value add service provision and innovation such as lactate testing, drag tests, and heart rate monitoring.
12. Establish a set of process related KPIs (i.e. not just swim time targets) for athletes and provide detailed feedback to drive the planning and activity of training programmes to target improvement against these process targets.
13. Resolve the non-branded team kit issue with the OCI.
14. Ensure coaches and athletes are roomed separately in the Olympic Village.
15. Secure additional coach accreditations to enable more coaches work directly with their athletes during the Games.

16. Facilitate athletes to remain at the Olympic Village until the Closing Ceremony if they wish to.
17. Increase the ticket allocation for athlete families.
18. Create a family support programme for those supporting athletes at the Games.
19. Improve the working relationship and communication with the OCI.
20. Ensure there is stronger role clarity and line management within the High Performance Programme.

## TRIATHLON RECOMMENDATIONS

### Triathlon Ireland recommendations:

1. Ideally separate the TD and Lead Coach role. If this is not practical given the size of the programme, provide additional logistical and administrative support to the TD.
2. Formalise the coach development structure. In the short term identify coaches with potential to succeed at the highest level and look to fast track support for them potentially through international contacts or domestic discipline specific contacts ensuring they are aligned with the TI performance system.
3. Reduce the dependence of athletes on the TD at the Talent Development Squad level through clearly defined roles and expectation setting.
4. Increase the number of athletes in the talent pipeline through continuing with the current Talent ID programme and investigating more formalised talent transfer options with Swim Ireland.
5. Investigate the viability of multi-sport or two sport training camps with Athletics Ireland, Cycling Ireland and Swim Ireland where resources could be pooled and/or identify appropriate international training groups for elite level athletes in year one and two of the cycle.
6. Set a clear policy around the introduction of new equipment at major championships.

### Non Triathlon specific recommendations:

1. Include an athlete lifestyle support practitioner as part of the Tokyo 2020 team to begin the post Games support immediately after competition. Ideally this person should be involved in the programme with the majority of athletes pre Games.
2. Include a family expectations workshop in the pre Games preparation programme designed to acknowledge the importance of families and to set clear expectations of how they can assist during the Games in terms of avoiding distraction, contact and access expectations etc.

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# TEAM IRELAND





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