



Performance Parenting



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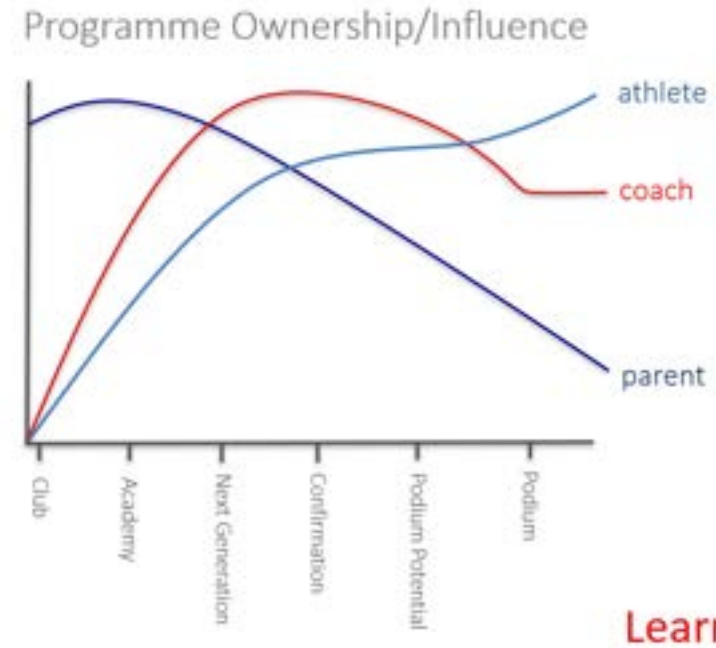
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Why do we think Performance Parents are important?

Quite simply because the single greatest influence on a child and its development is its parent(s). As a parent you are in charge of the environment that your child grows up in and arguably their most influential role model, heavily influencing the values and beliefs they develop about themselves and the world around them.

In triathlon, given the nature of the sport, we believe that parents probably have an even greater role to play than in some other sports, especially when your athlete is living at home. Your athlete could be a member of a swimming, athletics, cycling and triathlon club and in most cases the coaches of those clubs, quite understandably, have their own agendas and plans and aren't likely to collectively communicate.



Your role as a parent


We believe you as a parent play a crucial role in supporting and facilitating your child to learn and develop in the sport. This doesn't mean you need to be(come) an expert coach or technical advisor. However, it is important that we all remember that a lot of learning will take place outside of races and training and you are probably best placed to support this.

So the question is how can you support and facilitate your child's learning and development most effectively?

We'd suggest the following three areas can support you to be an even better performance parent and have split this handbook up accordingly, they are;

1. Understanding the development journey
2. Important sport specific knowledge
3. Being the best possible supporter and facilitator



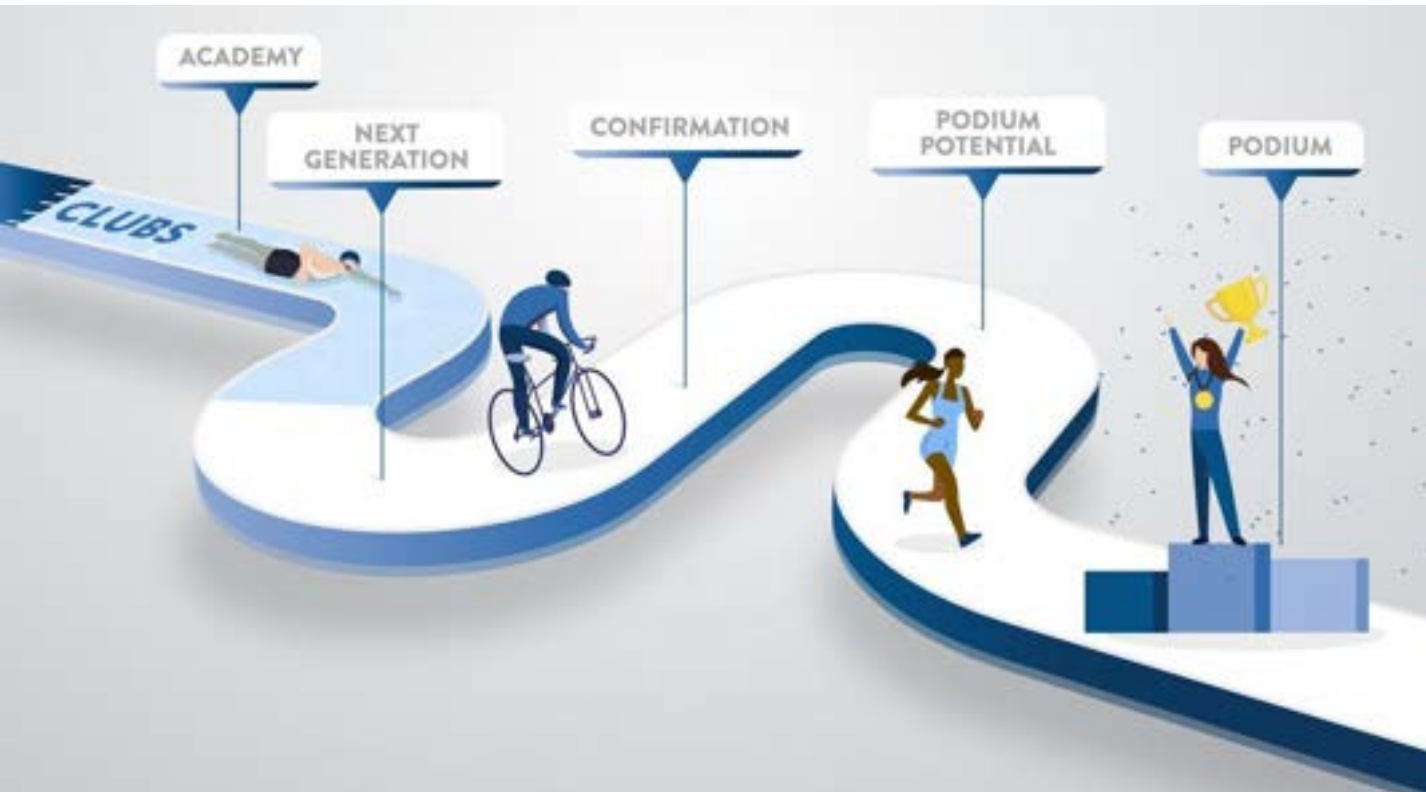


Section 1

Understanding the journey

The Pathway

Understanding the journey begins with having an understanding our performance pathway and its various stages



1. **Academy** is our first step and is about exposing athletes to performance triathlon. There are 12 Academies across Britain: 1 in Scotland, 1 in Wales and 10 in England.
2. **Next Generation** squads contain the best developing triathletes of each Home Nation. At this stage athletes are exploring the basics of triathlon performance.
3. **Confirmation** is the first step into the UK Sport funded World Class Programme. Athletes are looking to confirm their potential for the highest levels of the sport by exploring and enhancing the necessary skills, abilities and behaviours.
4. **Podium Potential** is the final developmental stage of the Pathway where athletes enhance and begin to excel in high performance triathlon.
5. **Podium** itself is where our very best athletes reside – athletes who excel at world level through medal delivery at the Olympic Games.

Understanding the Journey

As well as understanding what each stage of the Performance Pathway looks like there are some simple but important considerations that we hope can help your understanding.

Independent Learning and Problem Solving

Being successful in triathlon, as well as in many other walks of life, will require athletes to be able to learn independently and problem solve. With the volumes of training done in this sport, especially at senior levels, athletes will always be doing significant chunks of that without a coach, this means they will need to understand what they are doing and why and with that be able to adapt accordingly if challenges arise. Similarly triathlon is a very dynamic sport, no race is ever the same and racing across three disciplines means there is always that can go wrong – again supporting athletes to make decisions and solve problems for themselves, in and around training and competition, and learn from that is critical for future success.

Finally our very best athletes will work with big support teams, maximising this opportunity will be more likely with a good level of independent decision making and an ability to problem solve.

The key principle here is, assuming it is safe to do so, let them figure things out for themselves and with that resist the urge to tell them what or how to do it – which isn't always easy! In section 3 of this book you will find some questions that can promote learning, while in section one of our Parents ADF Handbook [here](#) there is some more information on how to support independent learning and guiding discovery.



We all develop at different rates

From experience you'll know that we all develop and learn at different rates. For example, one athlete may learn to tumble turn more quickly than another. This may be due to physical development or cognitive (mental) development, or just finding a particular skill or technique easier to learn. Just because someone develops physically or cognitively a little later than someone else or finds something a little harder to learn at first, doesn't mean they can't be just as good as the person who gets it right first time.

In addition, we can all respond differently to a particular stimulus, e.g., four athletes can follow the exact same six-week triathlon training programme and all get different results. One might improve their speed more versus the rest, one get stronger, one improve their endurance and one may not step forward as much physically but improve their psychological skills. Comparison to others can be a key source of feedback for young people. As a parent it is important to understand this and support your athlete by reminding them that we all develop at different rates and will all respond in different ways to different training stimuli and with that to always encourage them to focus on themselves and their own goals.

Critically, and very much tied into us all developing at different rates, is the fact that current performance does not predict future success. Not being the best as a young athlete does not mean not being the best as an older/senior athlete.





The journey will not be in a straight line and it will take time

As you will read from our case studies any development journey will not be without roadblocks and deviations from the straight line and they will all take time. It is easy to assume that all Olympic champions have simply stepped from one stage of their journey to the next without setback or challenge – this is never the case. Supporting your athlete to deal with setbacks is crucial

The more they enjoy it the better they will likely do

Linked to the first pillar of the ADF Training as Play a deep seated passion and/or fascination for the process is often what drives highly successful individuals across any field of achievement. Support your athlete with falling in love with what they do and always look for that to be linked to process (i.e., things that are within your child's control; the things they can *do*) and not just the outcome (i.e., something that is not within their control). Winning or being successful when young is a big driver for most kids choosing a sport but there will come a time when the winning stops or becomes much more difficult, at this point if a deep passion for the sport hasn't been built it is highly likely that the athlete will drop out. Our Parents guide to the ADF [here](#) might help here

Learning from mistakes or setbacks is as important as learning from success

Setbacks are inevitable but what often sets the best apart is their ability to bounce back quickly despite the challenge and disappointment.

Common setbacks are illness, injury, non-selection, poor performances and the impact of growing. While difficult to navigate powerful learning and growth can come from setbacks if the athlete is effectively supported. To do this always encourage a long-term perspective (i.e. the journey will take time) and challenge the athlete to reflect on what caused the set back and what changes they can make to learn from it and move on.

After a training session, race and/or a non-selection no matter how 'good' or 'bad' the outcome was, encourage your child to consider:

- What they did well?
 - Why did those things go well?
 - What they can do in future training session(s) or race(s) to keep on improving or replicating those things?
- What they would do differently next time?
 - Why is that?
 - What they can do in future training session(s) or race(s) to improve those things?

As we said earlier, you don't have to be the expert here or offer advice on what to do. Ask these questions and listen closely. Allow your child to make sense of the experience for themselves and encourage them to speak to their coach if they are not sure of the answers or what they can do to improve.





Always praise effort, commitment, and a drive to learn and be better

Your child cannot control the outcome of a race, or whether somebody else performs better on a particular day, so while it is absolutely OK for them to want to win, ensure you are reinforcing the things that your child did well (i.e. why did they win? What did they do?) or that which they can do to improve (e.g. practice your race pace running in training). Those who work hard, enjoy learning, striving to be better and are able to focus on controllable parts of their performance or the process (e.g. their swim technique; their transition skills; their effort; etc.) are more likely to be successful and manage setbacks more successfully in whatever they choose to do.

Be a positive role model

As the most important and influential role model to your children they'll learn to respond to events or experiences based on how you respond to similar events or experiences. Stay aware of your own responses (both the verbal and the non-verbal ones) and reinforce the messages that you want to reinforce in your child by being a great role model.

Balancing Dual Career Commitments

We are yet to experience an athlete at this age and stage of the Pathway who has been a true professional e.g. supporting themselves fully by earning a living from the sport; this is allied with the fact that numerous athletes in our pathway have serious academic aspirations.

As such athletes often until the very last stage of the Pathway, are going to need to successfully manage the dual career balance, in this case that being balancing triathlon with academic study, or balancing triathlon with some type of work, be that full or part-time. As said, this challenge is not just experienced at one stage either but almost without exception, and especially for those choosing to study at University, it is evident across three to four stages – Academy, Next Generation, Confirmation and Podium Potential. Simply put athletes who reach the higher levels of the Pathway learn to become experts in managing this balance on a consistent basis year on year.

So, successfully managing this balance will mean achieving both sporting and academic/employment goals consistently year on year. This will mean training and racing properly and attending the key camps/training days and competitions while also doing well in exams or achieving in a job. This is not easy and is absolutely a balancing act throughout each year. It does not mean dropping one or other of objective in favour of a singular focus at different points each year, this is not sustainable in the long term and will lead to underachieving across both. What it will mean is, with the support of your Pathway Coach along with your home network, planning ahead and having high levels of organisation and communication. This will include between the athlete, the programme, home coaches, you the parent and your athlete's place of learning or employer.

We also endeavour, wherever possible, to schedule camps and competition experiences during weekends and/or school/academic holidays.



Triathlon Journey Case Studies

As you will already have read no journey to the top of the Olympic podium will be a straight line, there are always bumps on the way. Olympic Champions Georgia Taylor Brown and Alex Yee have kindly allowed us to use their own journeys as an illustration of this. Both have had significant challenges to overcome in their early to mid careers as well as directly before the Tokyo Olympics.



Georgia Taylor Brown –timeline to the Tokyo Olympics

Georgia was selected onto the ENG programme at the age of 15 having not ridden a bike before, so found early training camps a real challenge. As such it took her the best part of 2 years to get grips with bike riding, thanks to her swim/run ability by this point she was in selection contention for Junior Champs, but didn't perform well in the trial race and missed out on selection for both the Worlds and Euros.

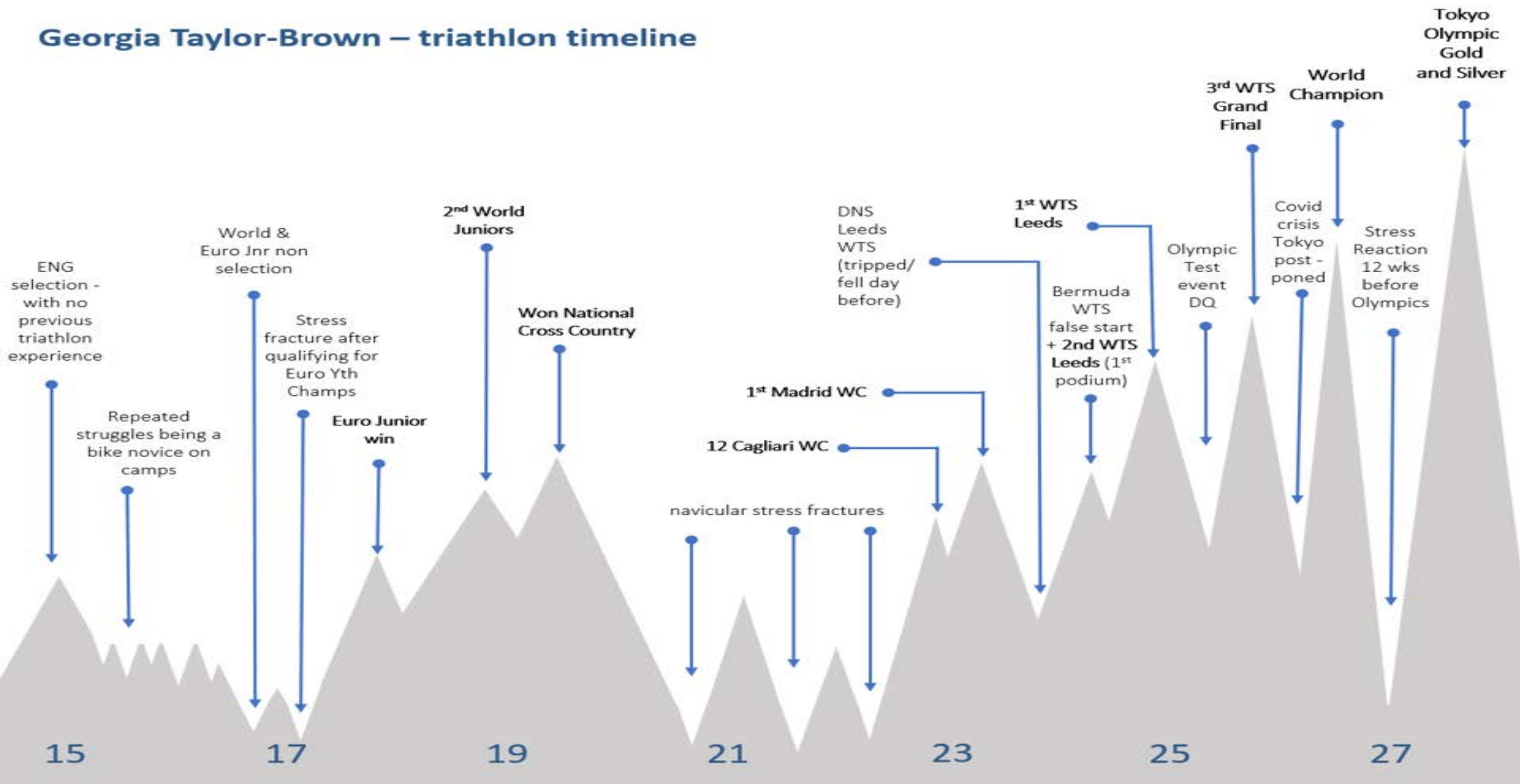
This only hardened her resolve supporting her qualifying for the European Youth Champs. Unfortunately she didn't get to race there either being diagnosed with a stress fracture. Once back to full fitness (age 18) she made her first junior team (12th Auckland Worlds) before the next season (age 19) winning the Europeans and coming 2nd at the Worlds as well winning the (senior) National Cross Country Champs.

All came crashing down at this point when a very difficult 3 years followed, while studying for her degree at Leeds Uni, thanks to several navicular stress fractures. Not losing faith Georgia held onto to her Olympic dreams and once recovered (now 23 years old) she was over the moon with a 12th place in the Cagliari World Cup, her first big race back. Her form continued to build from this point onward despite tripping over the day before her first WTS in Leeds and not starting. An Olympic Test event DQ and coronavirus followed as further challenge alongside the joy of Olympic selection before everything came crashing down with a serious stress reaction only 12 weeks before the Olympics. Despite only 4 weeks of proper running and a puncture in the individual race Georgia still managed amazingly to take a gold and silver at the 2021 Olympic Games.

See over the page for Georgia's timeline in picture format



Georgia Taylor-Brown – triathlon timeline





Alex Yee – timeline to the Tokyo Olympics

A Bromley boy, Alex began his triathlon journey age 11 at Crystal Palace Tri competing at the IRC's before graduating to the London Academy and then the ENG programme.

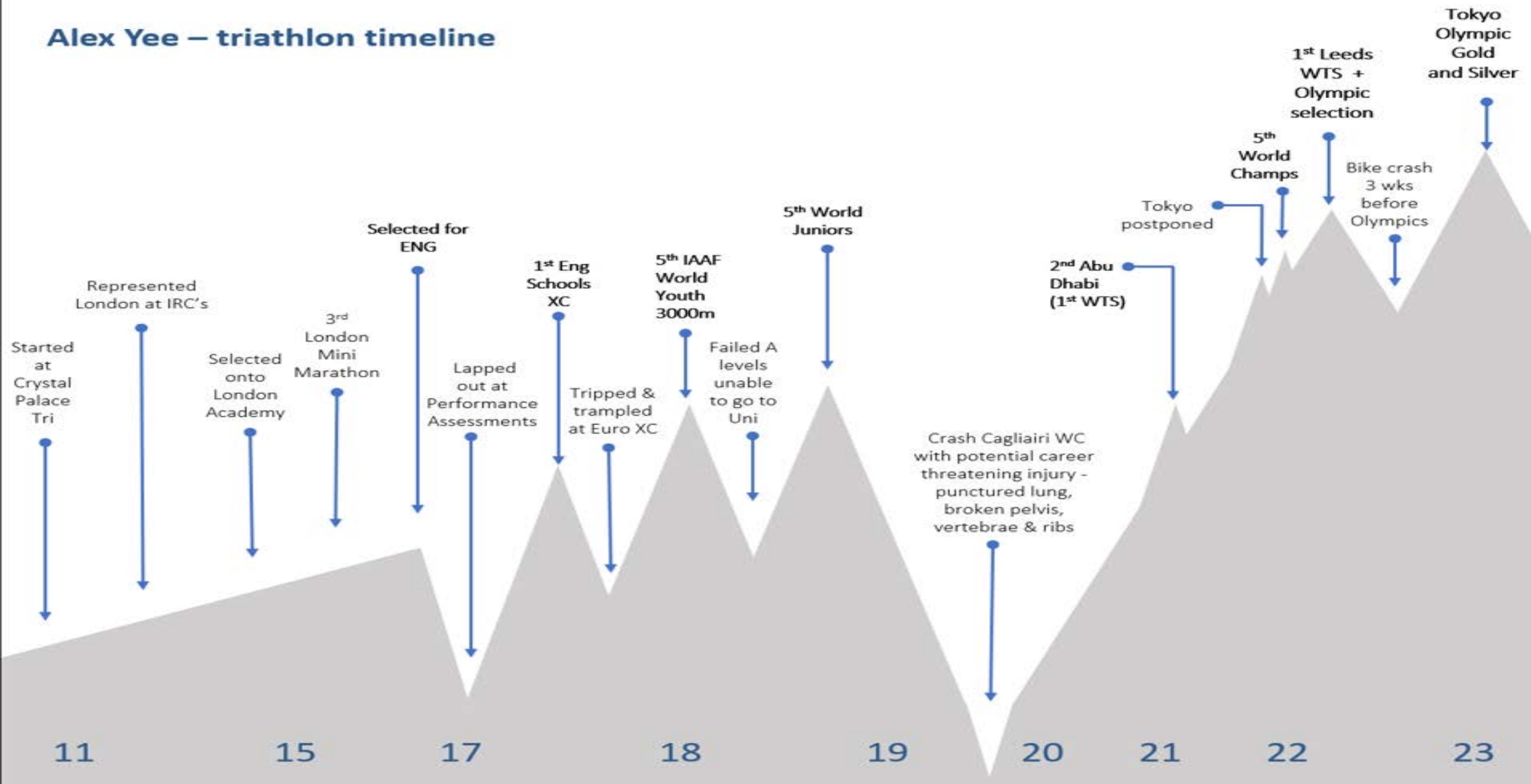
Small through his early teenage years Alex really started to step forward around age 16/17 with national level run and triathlon results. With swimming still a relative weakness ENG selection very quickly resulted in a harsh reality check when he was lapped out at the Performance Assessments. Alex responded in the right way by doubling down on his riding while also focusing on high level running. As such he bounced back with a win at the English Schools XC and selection to World level running events followed, as did being tripped and trampled at the Euro XC Champs, a bitter pill to swallow as he was the race favourite and running strongly in the lead group at the time. His swim/run work began to pay off with 5th place at the World Jnr Tri Champs (age 18).

Failing his A levels just prior to this was a major set back meaning he wasn't able to take his place at Leeds Uni, taking a year out to re-sit. The re-sits never came though thanks to a high speed crash at the Cagliari World Cup. This led to multiple broken bones and a punctured lung, a long rehab in hospital both in Italy and back in the UK followed along with a whole season out. Not losing faith in his ability to overcome the injuries and get back to racing an amazing WTS debut, with a 2nd in Abu Dhabi, followed some time later (aged 21).

A beneficiary of Tokyo being postponed, as he was still developing his swim/bike, Alex claimed Olympic selection with his first WCTS win in Leeds and not even a heavy bike crash 3 weeks before the Tokyo 2021 Olympic Games, and several key sessions missed, could keep him off the podium.

See over for Alex's journey in picture format.

Alex Yee – triathlon timeline





Section 2

Sports specific knowledge

The Athlete Development Framework

We have our own development philosophies that are pulled together in a framework that is known as the ADF for short. Having a basic understanding of the ADF we believe is important in helping your athlete develop in the sport. In order to help with this you can find an introduction to the ADF [here](#) on our website and you can also find a more detailed guide that is aimed specifically at parents/supporters on the same page you found this handbook

Physical Maturity

As already discussed we all develop at different rates and this is often nowhere more apparent as we physically mature. Sport often favours earlier developers and for the most part Triathlon is not that different. Strength and power are key elements in both swimming and cycling and so early developers are generally at an advantage here. Whilst (endurance) running is less influenced by strength/power and early maturation, critically when running off a bike a stronger athlete will tend to deal with the fatigue better and so this should also be borne in mind. Our research so far would indicate that physical maturation, whilst still relevant for girls, plays a more important part in influencing the outcome in boys events. Females as a rule are more reliant on their aerobic systems than on strength/power, while for males strength/power plays a bigger role. Aerobic systems are still influenced by physical development but the effect is less apparent than that seen in strength/power at these ages.

There are pro's and con's to both being an early or a late developer which are covered on the next two pages



Early Developers

- Are more likely to be at the front of the race and especially are more likely to be in control of the decisions they make in the race.
- In both the swim and bike they will have the strength/power to support their decision making by being able to move up, cover gaps, create gaps and race aggressively much more easily than their peers.
- Are better able to get out of trouble if a bad decision has been made.
- Are more likely to be selected to teams as they are getting better results.
- May not be challenged enough physically so races can be too easy, consequently learning experiences are not as profound and obvious.
- Getting away with making poor decisions and getting out of trouble by relying on strength and power is unhelpful at later stages in the Pathway when the impact of physical maturity levels off.
- Thought needs to be given here to exposing them to racing where this can't happen, they are put under pressure and have less time to make decisions.
- Constantly getting good results can lead to an outcome focus and a potential complacency that this will continue. Early developers will often be put under considerable pressure when others catch up and this can lead very quickly to them dropping out as it is difficult for them to come to terms with having to struggle and not getting the results they have been used to.
- Focusing on process and not outcome at all times becomes absolutely critical, as does being honest with the athlete about their physical development versus their peers, and helping them to maintain a long term perspective.

On time or late developers

- Are less likely to be in control of their race and will be more likely to be just keeping up. They will be forced to make quicker decisions and learn faster.
- If they learn fast enough and can keep up well these athletes will quickly become very strategic and intelligent in their approach to racing and decision making.
- Will also probably be forced to consider how they can improve technically and tactically to just keep up.
- If managed well this should naturally develop more of a performance/process focus.
- Will often also become more resilient and really learn to strive as racing is tough and difficult and this can be a real strength for later on.
- Making a mistake in a race can be stark and immediately lead to them being dropped.
- It is also difficult for such athletes to ever race when they have more physical control over the outcome.
- Some thought should be given to them racing in other disciplines/formats or events where they are in control and can benefit from this and the associated decisions, learning and building of confidence that will come with this.
- Always struggling to finish near the front and in the perceived better positions can affect both selection for teams and can build the belief that the athlete isn't good enough. This can often lead to such athletes dropping out of the sport early as finishing further back in the field can be de-motivating.
- Parents and coaches should encourage a very long term perspective here and through clear process goals and thoughtful race planning through the season keep athletes motivated.

Relative Age Effect RAE

An athlete's relative age refers to when in the calendar year they are born. There is good research across a number of sports (including Triathlon) to show that athletes born earlier in the competition year are more likely to succeed as seniors, in triathlon this is more obvious for boys than for girls, but does exist for both genders. Researchers will split athletes in four quarters according to the competition year, Q1 being born in January, February and March and Q4 being born in October, November and December. A Q1 athlete with an 'early' birthday will often be more physically mature and therefore likely to be better, faster, stronger than an athlete with a 'later' Q4 birthday.

This can mean they are presented with better development opportunities e.g. they're selected into better teams or onto better development programmes and with it exposed to better coaching and having better peers to train with. As a result they develop at a faster rate and so are more likely to continue to improve and keep getting the better opportunities. The 'later' birthday athletes can miss out on these benefits and so are more likely to fall further and further behind and with that more likely to give up.

There are two main ways to combat RAE. One is by educating athletes, parents and coaches as to what it is and how it works. Better understanding will help support athletes no matter their birth quarter. Q1's understanding they are advantaged, especially if they are early or on time (physical) developers. Q4's being aware that they are disadvantaged especially if on time or late developers.

Secondly as a sport we have to do what we can to reduce its impact. To do this we monitor development rates and work wherever possible to give opportunities and select athletes, particularly into Academy and Next Generation environments, ensuring that we consider their stage of physical maturation and their relative age.



Female Athlete Development

All athletes will go through stages in their career when performance doesn't step forward consistently and there are obviously a number of reasons for this. Some, but by no means all girls may see a reduction in their rate of improvement and perhaps even a drop off in their performances during and after puberty. This is very normal. Very generally this is more likely to have more impact on girls who develop earlier. At the same time it is important to be aware that some girls, no matter whether early or late developers, may not notice much if any performance impact. Puberty will mean a change in body shape and composition for most girls (around age 13 for body shape changes with menstrual cycle or periods starting by age 16). This is normal and healthy and will not limit but rather enhance long term performance potential.

What is vitally important for all girls is being strong and robust. In addition a healthy (regular and manageable) menstruation cycle is central to long term female health and in particular is critical in supporting the development of bone strength. Any concerns around menstrual health should be raised with your GP, particularly lack of a cycle. Common injuries in endurance sport are often linked to impact and/or overuse. A robust athlete with good well balanced nutrition is far more likely to build strong bones and manage the necessary training loads without breaking down.

Success in Triathlon is not just about swim, bike and run. In line with the **Athlete Development Framework** (ADF) we are focused on developing the whole athlete. Any girls that do experience a slowing in performance improvement need to understand this will be temporary and that being patient is key. The focus should be on enjoying their sport, developing key pillars of the ADF e.g. **Training as Play, Informed Choice, Learning to Lead, Intelligent Training** while also staying strong and healthy.



Competition and Training

With 3 disciplines that link together often triathlon can seem like a complicated sport, especially for those parents who are either new to the sport or whose children don't have a dedicated triathlon coach. Hopefully the following advice and information helps to simplify some of that.

Competition If you want to find out more about anything related to Competition please visit our dedicated webpage [here](#). The page includes information on how the Super Series works and the philosophies behind our race programme. We also have Competition Maps for each age group Youth A, Youth B and Junior that detail what a season plan could like for each age group, along with other relevant information too; such as racing in the heat or the cold along with links to other webpages – Super Series application, selection policies, gear restrictions and the Performance Assessments.

Training It is difficult to give detailed information on training as athletes all develop at different rates, have different training histories and across three disciplines will have very different strengths and weaknesses to work on. There are though some basic common principles that do stand and these are detailed toward the back of the Academy Handbook [here](#)

Performance Assessments These take place annually and are the gateway to Super Series starts so are vital to attend for any athletes wanting to race at that level. Alongside the racing we run athlete and parent workshops on various topics to help aid sport specific knowledge and understanding. They will also give the chance to meet and chat with other parents. If your athlete is stepping into Super Series competition for the first time we also run an induction workshop designed to support your understanding and give you the chance to ask the questions you need about how the Series and the sport works. To find out more about the Performance Assessments please see [here](#).





Safeguarding & Welfare

We work hard to create environments for all Pathway athletes that are fun, engaging and support them to be better. To achieve this, they should always feel safe and be treated with respect while similarly also showing respect to others.

While we would always encourage athletes taking the lead whenever possible to bring light to any safeguarding or welfare situation that concerns them we appreciate that sometimes they do not have skills, experience or confidence to do this. If you are at all worried about the way any athletes in the environment, are being treated by others please speak to a coach or Welfare Officer. If a situation is more serious, the Home Nation Welfare Officer or the BTF Safeguarding Manager may also be contacted via concern@britishtriathlon.org

We would also encourage any athlete who is not comfortable talking to an adult in our environments about any of their concerns to call Childline on 0800 11 11 or visit [Childline's Website](#).

If you believe an athlete or anyone else to be in immediate danger from an adult or other young person, please contact the Police on 999.

BTF have created a resource for young triathletes to refer to in order to help them identify what behaviours are not appropriate, how to treat others and who to contact if you feel unsafe In any way. The resource can be found [here](#):

BTF have also created a young person's resource to help you stay safe online. It can be found [here](#):

Pathway Mental Health Care Referral Process

It is very normal (and healthy) for humans to experience a whole range of emotions in daily life. It is important to be aware of how you might spot the difference between normal, functional emotions and a mental health problem. Mental health problems are characterised by symptoms (including but not limited to things such as low mood; feelings of anxiety; dampened emotions) that last longer than two weeks and that are having a significant impact on daily life (including but not limited to things such as significant change in sleep patterns; change in eating behaviours; withdrawal from social situations).

If you have concerns about your athlete's mental health, we would recommend that you seek advice/signposting from a coach or a relevant Welfare Officer. If you need further support, then a visit to your GP can help to explore further help.

Young Minds [website](#) is a useful resource to help athletes identify their feelings, as well as give coping tips and outlets for further support if needed.

Mind [website](#) is a similarly useful resource

If you find yourself dealing with a mental health emergency dial 999.





Clean Sport

British Triathlon works with UKAD and World Triathlon to promote clean sport and the values of the UKAD's 100% Me programme. All athletes at Next Generation level will be provided with regular anti-doping education appropriate to their age and stage of performance development via either their Academy Programme.

Everything you need to know on anti-doping including prohibited lists, the use of and how to check medications along with testing procedures along with a lot of other useful information can be found [here](#) on the British Triathlon Clean Sport pages.

And/or you can download UKAD's Clean Sport app for [apple](#) or [android](#). We'd also recommend getting the Global DRO [app](#) to check any medication you are required to take.

Athletes under 18 will not be tested without parental approval and testing will always be conducted with a chaperone present. Athletes who are taking medically prescribed but prohibited medication are not required to let us or UKAD know, instead they are able to apply for a retroactive TUE (temporary use exemption) if tested. Athletes can use the [TUE wizard](#) to see what type of exemption is needed.

Reporting any concerns about antidoping in triathlon can be done via our website [here](#) or you can go directly to UKAD's site [here](#). Or alternatively you can get in touch with us through this email address cleansport@britishtriathlon.org

If you would like to speak to someone about anti-doping at British Triathlon please contact your relevant Home Nation Next Generation Programme.

Cardiac (CRY) Testing

Sudden death through cardiac arrests is an issue that is steadily gaining more attention due to unfortunate incidents featuring high profile sports people e.g., in football with Christian Eriksen and Fabrice Muamba both suffering cardiac arrests in the middle of games. Some may also be aware of the sad passing of cyclists Charlie Craig and Rab Wardell as well as triathlete Laurent Vidal in 2015 (4th place 2012 Olympics) due to cardiac arrest in their sleep. Soon after Laurent's death World Triathlon (WT) introduced mandatory heart screening for all athletes racing internationally and given the implications that any heart abnormalities might have for young people in our sport we began offering cardiac screening to all pathway athletes at our Performance Assessment weekend.

CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) is a charity that supports cardiac testing specifically to prevent sudden death from cardiac arrest and their test involves an ECG (electrocardiogram) that is read by a cardiologist.

While CRY testing is available, and actively encouraged, at the Performance Assessments it is not obligatory, however, any athletes racing, or having aspirations to race internationally, will need a CRY test or ECG carrying out every two years as part of the WT Pre Participation Evaluation that is mandatory for entry any WT sanctioned event. See over the page for more information on this. Athletes can also book their own test through CRY independently should they choose, see [here](#).





World Triathlon Health Check

All Junior/Youth athletes competing internationally in WT/ET events are required to complete a Pre-Participation Evaluation (PPE). Failure to do so will result in you not being able to be selected and entered for any WT/ET event. Such evaluations operate across many different sports to better identify athletes at risk from electrical or structural heart abnormalities that may have serious repercussions when the heart is under stress during training and racing. Details of how to complete the PPE can be found [here](#) . A PPE lasts for 2 years at which point a re-test is required.

The PPE is basically split into two parts, part one being the cardiac screen and part two is the medical sign off. CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) conduct cardiac screening nationwide and for most athletes this is the easiest, most accessible and cost effective screening option. To complete part two you will need an appropriately qualified Doctor to read your screen results and sign it off. There are significant medico-legal responsibilities at sign off and some GP's have the necessary training/experience and some don't. Sign off therefore can be difficult and expensive to complete if your GP isn't qualified as a private consultation is often the only option. To support this process and reduce the expense and logistical difficulties British Triathlon offers CRY screening and medical sign off at much reduced costs biennially at the Performance Assessments weekend and all Home Nation athletes are prioritised and encouraged to make use of this.



Section 3

Being the best possible supporter and facilitator



Use questions to promote learning

Becoming an expert in using questions is one of the best ways that you can promote independent learning and problem solving.

Questions can be great both to help develop your child's understanding of themselves and of the sport, and to promote reflection and learning. Here are our top tips to help you ask better questions;

1. Use open questions e.g. those that start with 'what', 'how' or 'tell me about ...', instead of closed yes/no answer questions.
2. Be a good listener. Good listeners are often more likely to ask better questions as they take the time to understand. Show that you are listening by looking at them, nodding and/or saying things like 'hmm-mm' as they talk.
3. Ask follow up questions and dig deeper e.g. 'what makes you say that?', 'why do you think that?'
4. Be comfortable with silence. We feel a need to fill silence, by being quiet you will often elicit more information from whoever you're questioning as they'll likely fill the gap.
5. Let them talk without interruption, interruption can break a train of thought. It's important to let them speak first and get their perspective across before you speak.



Use questions to promote learning (continued)

5. A quick summary or reflection can help order thinking especially if the answer is long or who you're questioning is struggling to order their thoughts. For example, your child might say, 'my transition was just so rubbish today, it cost me loads of time and meant I couldn't get back to the group on the bike. I'm so annoyed because I would've done so much better if that hadn't happened'. You might try to reflect back to them something like, 'you feel like your transition had the biggest impact on your performance today?'. Remember, you are not there to solve, but listen and help your child process their own thoughts. By reflecting back to them you are showing that you really are listening.
6. Be aware of your position when asking a question. Your experiences, values and beliefs will naturally influence your position and potential biases. Remember, your child is the one who has done the race/training session, not you. To this end aim to be as open as possible and not make suppositions or assumptions that could influence the answer that comes back to you.
7. Very much following on from the above understand when you are asking leading questions. A leading question is overly suggestive and leads toward a particular answer/outcome/conclusion (e.g. 'you didn't really get in a good position in the water today, did you?'). These will sometimes be useful when guiding a learner especially if they're well off track but they can also quickly close down avenues of exploration.

Three great simple questions that you can ask repeatedly after a training session or race would be;

1. What did you enjoy most?
2. What did you learn?
3. What can you do better at next time?

Plan Do Review

Is a simple learning tool that is really useful for athletes looking to improve and work on their development needs. Going through this process will help athletes to develop their self-awareness (who they are; what they need; how they perform at their best), which will ultimately help them to make better decisions about within and outside of triathlon. We would encourage all athletes in our Pathway to constantly use this tool to support their development and progression. Remember that as children's brains are still developing they might find some parts of this process harder. For example, you might notice that your child is unable to review a situation (hypothetically) from a competitor's perspective – this is probably not because they are not trying or don't care; it is probably because their brain is not yet developed to enable them to do think abstractly or think about things from someone else's perspective.

See the next three pages for a breakdown of each step of the process.





Plan

Any plan requires a clear focus or purpose and goal setting is a great tool to help here. Setting goals to achieve in training, competition and life supports a targeted approach that athletes can check against to review their progress. The following might be useful for your athlete to think of when they're planning and goal setting.

- What are they looking to achieve?
- How will they do this?
- What might they need to improve to achieve the goal?
- What support do they need to achieve the goal?
- Who will they need to tell about their plans?
- What might get in the way of them achieving your goal?
- How does the goal relate to their ambitions (short/medium and long term)?

Do

Aligned to the 4 E's and the ADF our focus at the doing stage is very much about athletes learning through exploring and enhancing their abilities. You might also want to be ready, if appropriate, to guide their discovery and learning. Also aim to reinforce that mistakes are a part of learning and ensure that your athlete feels 'safe to explore' without judgement. The following might be useful here,

- Is what they're doing linked to their plan?
- Are they demonstrating the behaviours that will lead to progression and improvement?
- Have they got enough time and space to explore and learn?
- Is their goal measurable so as they can assess their progress?





Review

Is a crucial part of the process that helps to maximise learning. Self-reflection is a key skill in a successful athlete's arsenal, so look to develop this by always encouraging your athlete to reflect on their training, racing or anything other relevant learning. The following might help here,

- What have you learnt?
- What went well?
- What could have been better?
- What would you change if you did it again?
- Did anything get in the way of you achieving your goal? If so what?

Emotional self regulation

Athletes ability to self-regulate or manage their emotions in competition (and/or training) is important. Nerves can be really normal and helpful for athletes to experience before a competition. When there is something at stake (e.g. a race to win), our brain will recognise this and respond by causing a whole chain of events in our body, resulting in the physical feeling of nerves.

To put the experience of nerves into a different perspective, you might want to encourage your child to think about a time they felt really excited, and then compare this to a time they have felt really nervous– they will probably be surprised to discover that some of the physical sensations (e.g. butterflies in the stomach; beating heart; sweaty palms) were pretty much the same.

What can be really useful is for athletes to understand how they like to feel when they perform at their best. For example, one athlete might like to feel very relaxed and calm on the start line, and another athlete might like to feel really, really nervous and jittery on the start line. Encourage your athlete to reflect on this as part of the plan, do, review process. If they think they perform best when they are calm, encourage them to think about what might help them to become and stay calm before a race (e.g. listening to relaxing music in the car; basing themselves away from the start line when they arrive at the venue; taking some deep breaths on the start line). If they think they like to perform best when they are nervous, encourage them to think about what might help them to become and stay nervous before a race (e.g. listening to upbeat music in the car; basing themselves right in amongst the action when they arrive at the venue; shaking their legs and arms out on the start line).

Project 18

Deciding what to do when athletes leave school or college at 18 is a big decision and for many of our athletes will lead to significant changes. This specifically designed resource, that can be found [here](#), is designed to help support the decision making process and hopefully start to think about how to better prepare for the transitions that happen around it. It also contains a lot of other useful relevant information.

This transition we believe is key in our pathway and as such we want to do all we can to support athletes through it, however, you as the parent, and with that the key influencer at home obviously have a large role here too

Understanding the following, as well as taking some time to familiarise yourself with Project 18, might help.

- Athletes do not need to go to a training centre nor study for a degree – while this is the most common route some athletes do chose to base themselves at home (or elsewhere) with success – see former 2x World Champion Helen Jenkins reflect on this [here](#)
- If a training centre is the right option there are 8 centres aligned to British Triathlon – see exploring options [here](#) to learn more





Project 18 (continued)

- While all centres are aligned to Universities you don't have to study to train at a centre
- Not many young people between the ages of 16-19 really know what they want to do and this is OK
- We don't always get our post 18 choices right
- Results at the end of college or school don't always go to plan – listen to Olympic Champion Alex Yee and WCP athlete Ben Dijkstra reflect on their experiences [here](#)
- Taking a year or more out at this point to consider options or to have a greater focus on training might be a good solution
- If choosing to study you don't have to do this full time – for many courses there is a lot of flexibility re part time study or splitting years – see [here](#)



Life after the Pathway

While working towards the Olympic dream and with that selection to the World Class Programme should very much be the target of all athletes on the Pathway the programme is looking to achieve more than this.

The World Class Programme aside there are 3 main exit routes for athletes from the Pathway

1. Continuing to race within the Olympic formats
2. Long distance or Multisport racing
3. Retiring from the sport or moving onto another sport.

Continuing to race within the Olympic formats

This is the most common choice that a number of athletes make, success in our sport comes relatively late and it is unlikely for junior athletes to move directly into the World Class programme. It is important to remember that athletes do not need to be members of a British Triathlon pathway programme to be selected into any of the events that World Triathlon operate and most athletes who race internationally are not members of the WCP. While most athletes will choose to base themselves at a British Triathlon funded or endorsed Training Centre but it is important to understand that some athletes may also choose to locate themselves elsewhere. As well as racing in the UK there are also options to join teams in their respective race series e.g., French Grand Prix, German Bundesliga.



Long Distance or Multisport Racing

Triathlon, mainly through long distance racing e.g., 70.3 and Ironman, offers athletes the option of a professional sporting career. While truly succeeding in being a professional athlete in the sport is a real challenge there are numerous events operated by Challenge, Ironman and the PTO that have professional fields and offer prize money, while World Triathlon also run some longer Championship events too. There is also a professional series in Cross Tri (Xterra) and opportunities to race for French Grand Prix teams in Duathlon, as well as World Triathlon Championships (see Multisport selection policies [here](#))

The costs of living and racing as a ‘pro’ athlete, however, should not be underestimated and there are some useful video interviews [here](#) with athletes who talk candidly about the challenges they face in supporting themselves to train and race full time. Also any athlete wanting to get a ‘pro’ start in any middle or long distance events will need to meet British Triathlon’s Long Distance Professional/Elite Criteria which is found [here](#).

Retiring from the sport or moving onto another sport

Our focus on whole athlete development we believe means that, through your time on the Programme, not only do athletes acquire and build great transferable skills (see next page) but will also have a set of unrivalled positive experiences too. As such we would encourage athletes to remember that whenever the time comes to move on from the Pathway and whether they choose to remain in the sport or not, their skills, knowledge and experiences learnt from their Pathway experiences may well open doors that may have otherwise stayed closed.

Athletes interested in potentially transferring to a different sport or wanting to find out more about coaching and/or working in sports administration/sports science or any other related avenues within Triathlon or another sport should please speak to their respective programme coaches and/or staff who can help support such enquiries.

Transferable skills

In line with the Athlete Development Framework (ADF) and our philosophy of Whole Athlete Development we work to support athletes with exploring, enhancing and eventually excelling in following skills that will transfer across many walks of life and in most cases will set them apart if and when they choose to move on from the sport.

Goal setting and planning – setting and being able to meet targets while simultaneously having a plan and being adaptable

Independence – being self sufficient and used to taking responsibility for themselves and their training

Decision making – our focus on Informed Choice supports you with an ability to seek information out, problem solve and make key decisions

Leadership – Learning to Lead gives them an exposure, in small doses, to leadership from a relatively young age and with it the chance to work on and develop great leadership skills and behaviours for their age and stage of development.

Time management – managing a dual career balance in a sport like triathlon that requires significant hours of training alongside a lot of academic and/or paid work is an excellent way to develop their time management skills.

Commitment – having an ability to commit and work hard to achieve success in the longer term

Dealing with pressure – A focus on Intelligent Racing and One Day One Race means performing and thinking clearly under pressure, managing expectations and developing the ability to deliver when it matters most.

Resilience – the ability to overcome setbacks and recover quickly from difficulties in their path

Teamworking – used to working collaboratively within and leading team/squad environments on set tasks/challenges for success

Communication – an ability to get on with and communicate well with people of all backgrounds across a wide age range i.e., coaches, staff members and other athletes from all over the UK and other nations

Learning, reflection and self awareness – constantly being in environments where learning is expected and being required to reflect on this, both individually and in groups, and evidence whole athlete/person development.

Learning from other parents

As most of you will already know one of the best sources of knowledge is other parents so please take the time to talk to other parents and share knowledge and experiences either at races or training days.

Facebook Group

We operate a closed group Facebook page specifically aimed at parents of Youth and Junior athletes and use this page to communicate with you. We'd recommend being a member if you're child is competing at Super Series level. To become a member please email katieparrish@britishtriathlon.org





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