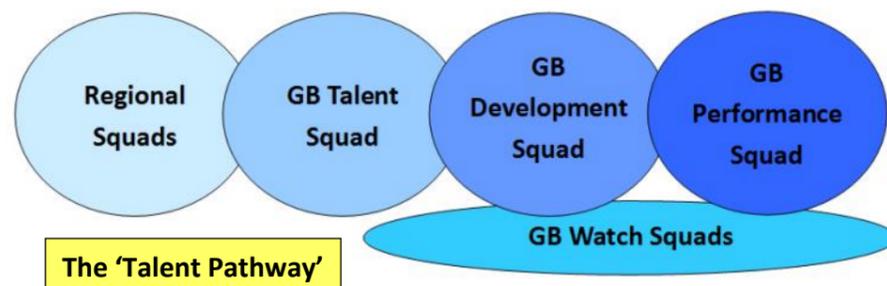


# Know your sport: Developing GB talent

Unfortunately many club members are finding that they are now past their peak athletic fitness and are hoping that their decline in performance over the coming years will be slow. However, juniors can look forward and hope that they can improve as orienteers - both in fitness and in technique. Developing juniors into potential world champions is one of the objectives of the national British Orienteering. Here we look at the different stages of progression from a local junior into a potential world champion - the 'Talent Pathway'



Look for members of the SCJS in their O-kit!

## Regional Squads

British Orienteering considers that the Regional Squads are the first steps for many on the talent pathway and they provide coaching and mentoring for juniors - typically for those aged about 14-18.

For the South Central region we have the **South Central Junior Squad (SCJS)**. This actually starts at a younger age - perhaps from 10 or 11. However before joining the juniors should be tackling Orange standard courses. These involve controls off line features and so requires some confidence in navigating across terrain. The squad typically meets once a month on Saturday mornings - often at one of the Saturday morning events being staged by a club in the region.

Performance by SCJS squad members is used as the basis for selecting the regional representatives at the national Junior Inter-Regional Championships. This usually takes place towards the end of September each year.

To obtain further details of the SCJS and its activities, look at the region's website or contact the Squad Manager at: [juniorsquad@scoa-orienteering.org.uk](mailto:juniorsquad@scoa-orienteering.org.uk)

## GB Talent Squad

From the Regional Squads, the best performing juniors can be invited to join the 'Talent Squad'. This aims to develop athletes towards top 20 places at Junior World Championships in the next one to five years and onwards to senior potential. It is for those up to and including age class 20. Members of the Talent Squad are selected to attend one (or more) of the following competitions:

- **Junior World Orienteering Championship (JWOC)** – Primary Target (age class 20): Athletes performing excellently can establish themselves as potential candidates for selection to the subsequent year's WOC.
- **Junior European Cup (JEC)** – (age classes 18 & 20): JEC is used as a training camp/competition for the assessment and development of athletes. Older JWOC athletes are unlikely to be selected to create opportunity for a wider pool of athletes.
- **European Youth Orienteering Championship (EYOC)** – (age classes 16 & 18): Competing at EYOC is a major step up in competitive orienteering for young athletes and is a great opportunity for staff to assess athletes' performances and establish, confirm or modify personal development plans.

## GB Development Squad

As Juniors move into the Senior classes (over age class 20), the focus is to identify those with potential at the next two to five World Championships. Members of this Squad are considered to have potential to be selected into the Performance Squad but have not yet demonstrated performances enabling them to be selected for it. They gain international experience by attending one or more of the following:

- **Euromeeting:** An opportunity to perform well against good competition and to stake a claim for selection to a World Cup, WOC or to the Performance Squad.
- **World Cups:** The importance of ranking points and the 'division' system of allocating the number of places to a nation mean that priority is given to Performance Squad athletes. However if places are available, athletes in the Development Squad will be considered for selection to teams competing at World Cups.
- **European Orienteering Championship (EOC):** Falls within the same category as World Cups above.
- **World University Orienteering Championship (WUOC):** A great opportunity for athletes in higher education.

## GB Performance Squad

This is the top level of selection - for the elite GB orienteers. As members of this squad are considered the countries best orienteers, members of the squad are being prepared to deliver relay and individual medals in the next one to three World Championships (*or at least that is the intention*).

The **World Championships (WOC)** take place each year with a variety of different formats - for 2017 in Estonia there were Sprint, Sprint Relay (with Legs 1 and 4 for women and Legs 2 and 3 for men), a classic 'Long' race and finally a Middle race. These provide opportunities for those with different skills to focus on one or two of these formats rather than attempting them all. The selectors have to recognise the varied skills of the athletes so as to maximise the chance of getting medals.

In addition to the WOC, Performance Squad team members are selected to attend various **World Cup (WC)** events. As the WCs now support and underpin performances at WOC, there is less opportunity to use WCs for development which might have been the case a few years ago. The World Cup is an IOF competition based on results from a limited number of designated World Cup events. For 2017 this is made up of events in 4 countries - a Sprint, Middle and Long in Finland in May, the WOC Sprint, Middle and Long in Estonia in July, a Middle and Sprint in Latvia in August and finishing with a Long and Middle in Switzerland in September. Points are allocated based on the results. After competition 10 the sum of the best 7 scores out of the first 8 competitions plus the scores from competitions 9 and 10 defines the World Cup winner 2017.



## GB Watch Squad

Finally there is the 'Watch Squad' which aims to support athletes whilst they transition from junior to senior international honours. However in this case it is typically for athletes who may wish to place their orienteering aspirations to one side while they focus on education, career, family, etc. Depending upon their performance, members of their squad will be considered for selection to any of the above competitions.

So could a BKO Junior become a World Champion? It has already happened once!. **Yvette Hague**, then aged 8, became a member of Reading OC in 1976 after hearing about the World Championships in Scotland that year. She won Gold at the 1999 'Short' Championship event having won Silver in the 'Long' and 'Short' in 1995.