



THE VANCOUVER ATHLETES REPORT



PRODUCED BY THE OLYMPIANS
OF THE BRITISH ATHLETES COMMISSION



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The British Athletes Commission would like to thank the following people who assisted in the production of this report

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- Georgina Harland
- Leon Taylor
- Graham Gristwood
- Elizabeth Johnson
- Goldie Sayers
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A thank you to the BOA for providing images for this publication, and to UK Sport and TASS for their continued support.



INTRODUCTION

This athlete report was compiled from the results of the athlete questionnaire given to each Great Britain 2010 Vancouver Olympian.

The total response rate was an excellent 87%. The athletes were asked to answer the majority of questions by giving an opinion of Very satisfied, Satisfied, Dissatisfied, Very dissatisfied, or No opinion. In some questions they were then asked to elaborate to explain their answers.

The report has been compiled by the British Athletes Commission, the independent athlete representative organisation that was established in 2004. Vancouver is the ninth Olympic Athletes Report and fourth Winter Games Report. The findings of these have enabled policy makers to have confidence in their decisions and focus on key performance issues. While we as athletes do not claim to have driven the changes through, the opinions and recommendations have been vital triggers for change in sport over the past 18 years.

However, as was highlighted in the Torino Report four years ago, the Winter Olympians remain a poorly funded team. Even those successful sports have a significantly smaller budget than equivalent summer sports, due to London 2012 and perhaps an apathy for Winter performance from key sporting organisations.

Winning the 2012 bid for London was fantastic for British summer sports and the Government have rightly added to the funding pot in order to achieve great results on home soil. While this is excellent news for the summer sports, those doing winter disciplines are further left behind, as they will receive none of this (and are also out of the gaze of potential sponsors). To put it into context, summer sports will receive a total of £309.2M¹ for the 2012 Olympiad, while the budget for winter sport for the 2010 Olympiad was £6.5M², plus an additional £4M through the TASS programme.

The majority of Great Britain's Winter Olympians feel that their National Governing Bodies have let them down. NGBs must objectively and comprehensively review themselves, recognise their failings, and seek ways to improve the entire situation – strategy, operations, Board, staff and athletes. We suggest UK Sport and the BOA have a key role to play in this, with assistance in Board, staff and programme development, alongside improving accountability. A little of this help has been found through the BOA's FTSE 100 initiative and a little UK Sport funding, but much more needs to be done.

Unfortunately, in regard to NGB performance and external assistance, these same words were written four years ago, and little has changed, in fact the situation is worse for many athletes. The horizon may be a little brighter, but much work needs to be done.

More positively, the winter athletes have continued to take a hard line on doping, with very strong and continued support of the BOA's anti-doping bye law.



¹ <http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/sport/summer/>

² <http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/sport/winter/>

ABOUT THE ATHLETE

Great Britain's Vancouver Winter Olympians are on average younger by two years, however, just as experienced as the athletes from the previous Winter Games in Torino. The figures show the average age in 2010 was 26 years with almost 8 years experience of competing at a senior international sporting level.

Figures & Findings

- 67% of the team were first-time Olympians, the same percentage as at the previous Winter Games.
- The team was made of 52 athletes, compared with 40 in Torino 2006, and 50 in Salt Lake City 2002.
- The average world ranking of those responding was 19th, compared to 19th seen four, & 17th eight years ago.
- The average Vancouver finish position of the team was 17th (16.6), compared with 15th (15.3) in Torino 2006, and 17th (16.9) in Salt Lake 2002.
- 29.5% were married or living with a partner.
- 53.8% were male, 46.2% female.
- 19% of the respondents had children.

Recommendations

- The high turnover of Olympians in each Olympic cycle (a trend from previous athlete reports), highlights continued need for Olympic Education as part of the athletes' preparation.
- The younger age of the Vancouver team is encouraging and this, alongside their ability to finish above their World Ranking at the Games, highlights the potential of Britain's Winter athletes if they are given consistent and reasonable support.



EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

The trend from the previous two Winter Games was that fewer athletes are working full-time in the year leading up to the Olympics and this has continued, halving from 24% to 12%. This means that they are able to take their training more seriously.

However, the number who are 'full-time' athletes remains similar and the majority are still in part time employment, highlighting that they still need to self-fund to achieve their goals. Generally the level of qualification of athletes has increased from Torino. Much of this due to the fact that more athletes in the team were funded and supported through TASS than any other body.

Figures & Findings

- 73% of the athletes considered themselves to be full-time athletes in the year leading into the Olympics, a similar number to those in 2006 (70%). It is encouraging to see that this has been maintained, though over a quarter still lack this advantage.
- Meanwhile the amount of athletes with A-levels/Highers increased significantly from the 2006 Olympics: 54% to 71%, while the amount of athletes with a degree rose slightly from 29% to 34%.

Recommendations

- Winter athletes spend a considerable amount of time abroad, so accessing normal courses & qualifications is very difficult. Education institutions need to continue to offer athletes flexible distance learning courses and degrees to help prepare for life after competition.
- Because of the lack of funding, athletes rely on part time employment. This requires NGBs to be flexible and supportive.
- Athletes must take advantage of continued education opportunities such as those offered by Adecco through the IOC, and by institutions in the UK through the TASS scheme. These courses need to be publicised by all agencies who work with the athletes



FINANCE & FUNDING

There remain two funding tiers in the Winter Olympic team, similar to the last two Winter Games. Unfortunately the overall financial picture has deteriorated over the past four years.

Figures & Findings

- Average income of respondents was £9,852 (£14,500 in 2006), which may be partially related to a younger team.
- 49% were in financial debt as a result of being an elite athlete, with the mean amount being £8,881. This is a significant increase from 37% at £6500 four years ago and is a worrying statistic.
- 69% of athletes were 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with the current funding system, compared to 36% from four years ago. From the comments, this number could be reduced by improving communication and transparency from NGB's and funding agencies.
- 67% were unaware of what results were required for them to achieve an APA compared to 38% from four years ago.
- 69% of the Vancouver Olympians were supported by personal sponsors, with the main benefits received coming in the form of modest financial input or kit/equipment supplies.
- The largest financial contribution to the athletes personal funding came from the national lottery, followed by personal sponsors, family contributions and TASS funding.

Recommendations

- UK Sport and National Governing Bodies need to clarify and communicate APA eligibility requirements for athletes to improve transparency and enable them to set clear goals and milestones.
- As many athletes are in receipt of personal sponsorship they need to be kept up to date with regulations regarding taxation.
- Athletes need to be able to access sound financial advice in order to plan for the future and the repayment of the debts that many have incurred.



COACHING

The coaching situation appears to have got worse over the last four years.

Worryingly, the overall satisfaction with the standard of centrally-provided technical coaches (in-season) is only 48% for the Vancouver Olympians. Worse still, 23% of athletes are not even provided with a coach during the season.

In terms of off-season (more generic) coaching, a concerning 31% of respondents stated that a coach was not provided, which is 10% higher than four years ago in Torino.

Figures & Findings

- In order to improve this dismal coaching situation for winter sports in the UK, more paid coaches was considered the most important factor.
- 51% of respondents would consider a career in coaching after retiring.
- 56% used a personal coach who was generally either voluntary or personally funded by the athlete.
- For 33% of athletes, their governing body insisted that NGB coaches were used.

Recommendations

- Governing bodies need to actively identify, prepare and educate the coaches of tomorrow, beginning with current athletes who would consider a role in coaching. This involves careful planning to create a structured and sustainable coaching programme with medium and long term coach pathways.
- The BOA's Olympic Coaching Programme should be one method used to develop and enhance Winter Sports coaching systems.
- UK Sport and/or Sports Coach UK, needs to take a more active role in assisting governing bodies to create quality coach education and pathways.
- All winter sports, especially those identified by their athletes, need to properly review and address current weaknesses in the vital area of coaching.

Athletes Comments

"Any coaching or facilities would be an improvement."

"The sport desperately needs more coaches but does not have any budget to fund this."

"The coaches we do have need more training, then they will be better at the technical side, the management & psych side of the sport"



FACILITIES

Through the Lottery and a few other organisations, the number of good quality generic training facilities has improved over the last decade.

Figures & Findings

- Only 49% of the athletes were satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of off-season sport specific training facilities in the UK.
- 44% were satisfied or very satisfied with the locality and access to facilities (61% in Torino).
- Consistent issues highlighted in additional comments were: sub-standard quality of facilities (e.g. ice for Short Track), athletes hiring expensive facilities with their own money, lack of time on sport specific facilities.

Recommendations

- There will always be limited sport specific off-season facilities in the UK, therefore athletes need to be prepared to relocate if they are serious about becoming world class. NGB's must support athletes who relocate, in whatever ways they are able.
- NGB's and Facility owners/managers need to work together to provide ample, reasonably-priced access to quality facilities, particularly in the final year of an Olympiad.
- All stakeholders from individual athletes to the BOA & UK Sport, should investigate innovative solutions to overcome these facility problems (e.g. negotiate more access in return for branding, speaking or experience events)

Athletes Comments

"We are lucky to have the national ice centre built in Nottingham. Unfortunately the gym there was never suitable for elite athletes and has now been turned into conferencing facilities... We do not have a choice of what time we receive training time on the ice... Crucially, the condition of the ice that we skate on is substandard, often covered with dirt that blunts our skates."

"We still have to pay for the use of expensive training equipment up to £60 per hour which in a sport that is not funded only puts added pressure to the funding side to the sport."

"Any coaching or facilities would be an improvement"



NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES

Overall satisfaction levels with NGBs have dramatically reduced, with the majority of sports scoring very poorly. These negative feelings are further highlighted by the strength and volume of the comments. On the up side, there are a few disciplines that generally buck this trend (Curling, Figure Skating, Short Track & Skeleton), however, each of these still has key areas that need addressing.

This dramatic drop in satisfaction is worrying and needs to be dealt with if we are to get the best out of our athletes at future Games.

The specific aspects covered were: Administration, Communication, Selection Policy, Use of financial resources, Ability to secure lottery funding, Ability to secure commercial sponsorship, Quality of staff, Number of staff, Performance Director.

Figures & Findings

- Only 33% are currently satisfied or very satisfied with their NGB. Four years ago this figure was 61%.
- Change in satisfaction: Only 26% of athletes were more satisfied than they were four years ago (46% in Torino), with 36% less satisfied (14% in Torino), while the remaining athletes said there was no change (26%) or they did not know (13%).
- The only aspect of NGB operations across sports that had greater satisfaction (54%) than dissatisfaction (36%), was that of the Selection Policy. This is perhaps unsurprising since these are the selected athletes.

Recommendations

- The BAC must highlight specific problem areas to specific NGBs.
- National Governing Bodies must take a long, hard look at themselves and be brutally honest. They must fully engage with athletes - their most vital resource – to address these problems.
- Athletes must be more proactive in taking ownership of their sport and gain an appropriate voice and level of representation, while remaining realistic that progress may take time.
- NGBs must be pro-active in engaging with UK Sport, the BOA and other more effective NGBs, to learn and understand how to improve. These others must in turn, offer clear guidance in specific areas.
- The BOA and UK Sport must challenge Board members to do their job properly and assist them in governance and up-skilling where necessary.
- Board members must make sure that governing body staff are properly accountable for their decisions, behaviour and performance, and deal with them effectively if they are not.
- Athletes must communicate regularly and constructively with their NGBs, to highlight issues and offer solutions.

Athletes Comments (all different sports)

“We are very fortunate compared with most winter sports”

“The ability to communicate and having a knowledgeable performance director would solve a lot of the problems within the sport.”

“The NGB has no structure, no performance director, no money and if radical changes aren't made - no future. The majority of the staff do not put performance first and have been more hindrance than help over the past year. A complete overhaul is needed with a proper development programme and performance structure.”

“It is complicated set up in curling - the NGB [RCCC]... the SIS and British Curling... and therefore I probably have more comment to make regarding this than the NGB itself”

“My NGB has just gone bust. They were awful in pretty much every way, my answers here relate to the old body even though a new organisation has been started and that has the potential to be much better”

SPORTS MEDICINE & SCIENCE

This area is very much split into the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Funded sports receive support from the institutes (EIS, SIS) and through TASS, and are generally satisfied or very satisfied with this support. On the flip-side, we have many winter Olympians who receive little sports science and medicine support, or self fund it, and are therefore at a serious disadvantage compared to their competitors.

The BOMI (formerly OMI) provided some very beneficial services for several athletes, many of whom were unfunded. This is similar for a small number of athletes at the Highland IS.

TASS appears to provide real benefit for some athletes it supports, though not all.

In general there was a decline in the satisfaction ratings across the sports medicine and sports science services compared to the Torino report.

Satisfaction ratings were asked for the year prior to Vancouver 2010 in the following areas: Medical (Sports Dr), Physiotherapy, Nutrition, Exercise Physiology, Performance Analysis, Strength & Conditioning, Other (e.g. Sports Psychologist).

Figures & Findings

- 30% of athletes either managed their own Strength and Conditioning programme or paid for it privately.
- 25% of respondents funded their own physiotherapy.
- *Sports Doctors & Physio:* 71% were satisfied or very satisfied with their sports doctors and 74% with physiotherapists (compared with 89% in both from Torino).
- *S&C Coaching:* 68% were satisfied or very satisfied (79% from Torino).
- *Nutrition:* 60% of athletes were satisfied or very satisfied, an increase of 10% from Torino.
- *Exercise Physiology* (lab and field testing): 58% were satisfied or very satisfied (65% from Torino).
- *Performance Analysis:* 45% of athletes were satisfied or very satisfied with the support they received (66% from Torino).

Recommendations

- All winter sports need to access and provide a global package of support services in a consistent and co-coordinated manner, over a four-year cycle. Where this may not be financially viable, consistent Physiotherapy and one other key sport-specific service should be the absolute minimum service level.
- The British Athletes Commission should contact certain sports, drawing attention to potential areas for improvement highlighted from the questionnaire
- The positive provision of the BOMI as a service provider is limited by its individual nature and inventive solutions should be sought to enhance accessibility of service delivery
- All NGBs must review their Sports Science & Medical provision to ensure the optimal services are delivered with the available resources.

Athletes Comments on Sports Science & Medicine

"SIS were hugely supportive and always went out of their way to provide the support we needed"

"[EIS] Strength and conditioning and sports therapy is fantastic!"

"I was only able to access strength and conditioning in a rehab capacity at the OMI but this was excellent."

"I have never had a strength and conditioning coach since I have been in the sport. How can any sport be world class when athletes are training themselves"

DRUG FREE SPORT

The BOA Bye Law of a lifetime Olympic ban for drug abuse continues to be highly supported by Britain's Winter Olympians, with 91% support.

In regard to the Athlete Whereabouts:

- 91% athletes felt they had the opportunity to receive sufficient training to complete the new Games-Time Whereabouts using ADAMS, thanks to Jude Ford and UKAD.
- Of those who use ADAMS year-round, only 68% said they received enough training for this, though four years ago this number was only 40%
- However, the day-to-day use of the online Athlete Whereabouts system (ADAMS) continues to cause concerns with a majority (69%) prepared to use some form of GPS tracking system, if available, instead of ADAMS.

The requirement of the whereabouts system therefore needs continually reviewing and updating to ensure the process is as simple and athlete friendly as possible. Education also needs to be an on-going process due both to the continual turnover of athletes coming into elite sports programmes and also because less than half the Winter Olympians are currently required to record their whereabouts year-round, though this may change.

The athletes' preferred method for receiving information on anti-doping is at a squad training camp session, though more individual advice may be needed in certain circumstances.

Figures & Findings

- At least 38% of the team were drug-tested during the Games and at least 54% were tested at a Holding/Preparation Camp.
- At least 12% of the team were not tested in the 12 months before their Holding Camp.
- 73% had their medication & supplements checked prior to the Games - a disappointing reduction on the 96% from Torino.
- Of the services provided by UKAD, athletes benefitted from using Global Drugs Reference Online and the 100% Me website/new UKAD Athlete Zone in particular.
- 74% use some form of supplementation (50% from Torino), of which only 66% were confident in using.

Recommendations

- Athletes must remember they are strictly liable for whatever is in their body so must ensure they take full responsibility for this, and if supplementing their diet, to only use products that have been batch-tested to minimize contamination risk.
- UKAD continue to ensure quality, on-going training for using the ADAMS whereabouts system.
- UKAD, UK Sport, BOA, NGBs and the BAC need to stress the major implications to athletes missing drug tests through giving poor whereabouts information – namely three missed tests in 18 months could lead to a lifetime Olympic ban.
- UKAD continue to provide information for athletes on how to check their medication, and to provide information on checking supplements.
- We would again call for Government to take steps to ensure medicinal standards of labeling and production of these products occurs.

ATHLETE REPRESENTATION

It is clear from the data that the Vancouver Olympians are better represented than those in Torino, although there is certainly room for improvement. Several still do not have a representative or do not know who it is, while also being unaware of their responsibilities.

Figures & Findings

- 69% had an athlete representative in their sport, up from 59% from Torino, 15% did not know if they had one.
- 24% had no contact with their representative at all (41% from Torino), but 24% have daily contact.
- Of those with a representative, 20% had no idea what their role was.

Recommendations

- The winter Olympians need to take a more active role in representing themselves within their sports, using available resources to assist their roles & responsibilities (e.g. BAC & website).
- Athlete Representatives need to actively and regularly communicate to other athletes as well as the PD and coaches.
- Governing bodies must have clearly communicated paths of correspondence to promote and assist representation, improve interaction, and improve relationships with their athletes.
- The British Athletes Commission must continue to take a lead in promoting and formalising representation within and across sports.



ATHLETE ROLE MODELS

Olympians are seen by society as role models, it is a responsibility that they have to accept. The 2010 Winter Olympians happily accept this and the vast majority are pleased to act as role models for children and young people.

Figures & Findings

- 59% of athletes had visited a school in the past 12 months, a large increase on the 36% from Torino, especially given the bigger team size in Vancouver.
- 85% are prepared to make visits to schools and colleges occasionally.
- 78% are prepared to act a mentor for a promising young athlete.
- 65% would develop a relationship with a specific school or college.
- 89% of athletes thought they should be paid for making visits.
- Of the 59% of athletes visiting schools, clubs etc, the vast majority (82%) were used through personal contacts.
- Seven athletes made at least five visits in the year before Vancouver 2010 – six of them through personal contacts, with the other athlete visiting a prolific 25 schools through a Youth Sport Trust scheme.

Recommendations

- There is a clear willingness by Britain's Winter Olympians to visit school and encourage young people. This must be harnessed.
- The Athletes Direct scheme, which coordinates athletes' visits to schools, should fill this gap enabling the enthusiasm of those athletes and schools to be harnesses for the benefit of the children. The athletes also get paid, thus helping to fund their Olympic ambitions.
- The Athletes Direct scheme could be used by governing bodies as part of their allocation of days given over to the NGB as stated in their Athlete Agreements.



BOA SUPPORT SERVICES

In this section it is noteworthy that many athletes feel the BOA Support Services are weighted heavily towards providing services to athletes based in the London region.

1) Passport Scheme

Free Access to Local Sports Centres, and free Oyster Cards were the Passport Scheme's most widely used benefits by the Vancouver Olympians. Not many athletes have taken advantage of the other benefits.

Those who use the Scheme are happy with it, though there are a large number of Winter Olympians who don't use it at all. This is generally because these athletes already have access to a generic training facility and the other key benefit that is already available is purely London-based (i.e. travel - Oyster card)

Figures & Findings

- 62% of athletes use the BOA Passport Scheme
- 40% felt that the scheme was good and 14.3% felt it was excellent



BOA SUPPORT SERVICES

2) British Olympic Medical Institute

The Sports Doctor, Physiotherapy, Physiology, Nutrition and Sports Psychology services were rated as Excellent, Good, Average, Poor, Very Poor or Have not used, over the past two years.

Whilst the services are primarily rated good or excellent, there is still a relatively low uptake on usage. This is partly because some of these services are covered locally at the Home Country Sports Institutes (for those who are funded), but also because athletes would like a more regionalised approach as it is so impractical to travel to London to receive ongoing support.

The most utilised service at the BOMI over the past 24 months was physiology testing/support, which was used by 40% of athletes. This also had the highest percentage at the Excellent rating (60% of users), however it was the only service that also got a rating below Average (13% of users rated Poor). The other services that are used to a reasonable degree considering the Institute's single location, were the Sports Doctor (36% of athletes) and Physiotherapy (22%).

Figures & Findings

- 50% of athletes have used at least one service at the BOMI in the past two years.
- 8% of athletes used the Sports Psychologist.
- 14% of athletes used the Nutritionist.
- 52% of BOMI users rated the service they used as excellent.
- 86% of BOMI users rated the service they used as good/excellent.
- 51% of the winter athletes were not aware of the BOA Intensive Rehab Centre at Bisham Abbey.
- The three who used the Rehab facility rated the overall care received was as Average, Good and Excellent, respectively.

Recommendations

- The BOA should negotiate access to Medical, Physiotherapy and Strength & Conditioning services at regional EIS centres, or through the SIS, for Gold & Silver Passport holders who are not covered through the Lottery or TASS.
- If this is not possible, the BOA should seriously consider a policy change and fund regional Medical and Physiotherapy for unfunded Gold members through existing systems, instead of investing the entire Medical/Physio budget centrally.
- The BOA should try to:
 - Access some of the London 2012 sponsors to gain additional benefits from them.
 - Negotiate a deal on national rail travel to benefit Olympians across the country.
 - Access discounts on grocery shopping, batch-tested certified nutritional supplements...
 - Communicate to athletes and NGBs about the Intensive Rehab Unit and how it works alongside the other elements (Science & Research, Clinical) of the restructured BOMI.

Athlete Comments

"To be able to access Physio through large hubs i.e. Bath Uni. The OMI is just too far for me to travel to get treated etc."

"More local benefits rather than ones purely based around London"

"Local medical cover"

"Maybe a cheapened access to batch tested certified drug free supplements"

"National rail travel help; food shopping help."

PRE-OLYMPIC TRAINING CAMP

Of all the athletes who completed this section of the survey (35/45), 80% attended a Preparation Camp. All were satisfied or very satisfied with the travel & transfers from the UK to the Holding/Preparation Camp as well as onto the Olympic Village, with just one exception (who was very dissatisfied). Despite these ratings, there were several negative comments regarding luggage.

The vast majority felt that the Camp experience benefitted their Olympic preparation. This is reflected in the finding that 82% would like a centralised Camp preceding Sochi 2014, with the remainder having 'No opinion'.

The most common rating for *all* the services and assistance provided was 'Very satisfied', with a tiny 1.5% of total responses being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Individual aspects analysed were: Doctor, Sport Specific Training Facilities, Performance Centre, Transport, Physio, Sports Massage, General Amenities, Communication/Information, Sports Science, Accommodation, Volunteers, Security, Press & Media.

Figures & Findings

- 57% described the Preparation Camp as 'Very Positive'.
- 29% described it as 'OK'.
- Only 1 athlete said it had a 'No effect' on their preparation, while 11% did not experience the Preparation Camp
- The Physiotherapy & Performance Centre scored particularly highly with 89% & 80% of users, respectively, Very satisfied.
- Usage was high across the board – 68% of athletes received Sports Massage, which had the lowest uptake.

Recommendations

- The BOA Preparation Camp team to continue with this high level of support and performance during future Camps, and if feasible, use one central Camp prior to Sochi 2014.
- Perhaps give a little more thought to some of the travelling aspects – one athlete didn't receive a meal on a five-hour flight, luggage issues, and option of paying for upgrade.

Athlete comments

"It was fantastic"

"Everything was excellent"

"It was perfect"

"We had to travel back and forth each day to attend the Canmore World Cup and for training. It would have been better for us to stay in Canmore."

"Would have been nice to have extra leg room or the option of personally paying for an upgrade on flight"



AT THE GAMES

Overall impressions of the Vancouver Games were highly positive. The atmosphere was seen as a major highlight and was due to the excitement and enthusiasm of the spectators, Canadian people, and volunteers, who all made the Games very special. Occasional negatives were related to the weather and subsequent venue conditions, alongside the excessive home-advantage programme employed by Canadian sport.

Team GB staff in both Whistler and Vancouver received high commendation whereby every single athlete felt they were approachable, and every athlete felt that if/when they had an issue, it was dealt with in a speedy, professional and friendly manner. All athletes bar one felt they were given the opportunity to achieve a personal best by the Team GB support team, and that they were an equally valued member of Team GB.

The majority of athletes were 'Very satisfied' with all the Support Services provided by Team GB at the Games, and 95% felt there was adequate Medical cover at both the Village and the Venue.

Clothing can be a challenge, but 82% regarded the amount of kit received as just right, and the majority of athletes scored Formal, Parade and Village clothing as 'Good', and most importantly, Competition wear as 'Excellent'.

Recommendations

- The BOA must continue with its high standard of support at Games-Time. This is already a challenge with limited accreditations, and will be even more difficult should there be a smaller overall team size in future.
- One improvement would be a higher standard of sports massage for larger athletes, something that was also reported in Torino 2006.

Athletes' comments

"Absolutely brilliant experience. Very motivated for Sochi 2014. The BOA made me feel very welcome and I enjoyed speaking to Princess Anne!"

"Despite a disappointing performance, the experience in Vancouver compared to that of Torino was night and day. I think the BOA can take credit for this in terms of the staff they had, the ethos and atmosphere they created"

"I will have fond memories from Vancouver about our good team spirit and a memorable spectacular along with my own personal best performance!"

"An excellent Games. Brilliant volunteers and spectators."



CONCLUSION

At the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games, Amy Williams' gold medal meant that Team GB finished 19th in the medal table, an improvement from one silver and 21st four years ago in Torino. Eight years ago in Salt Lake City the team were 18th by achieving one gold and one bronze – the best medal return since 1936.

Over the last three Olympiad, the average finish position was 17th (2002), 15th (2006) and 17th (2010), where the average world ranking prior to the Games was 17th, 19th and 19th. Evidently, our results have remained fairly constant.

A reasonable and realistic expectation for the British team was to arrive home from Vancouver with two medals. Unfortunately this was not achieved, and sports and parent organisations need to discover why and rectify the problem areas. On the flip side, many of the British athletes were young (over 20% were 21 or younger) and competing at their first Games, so the potential to improve is clearly there.

Olympic Winter Sport is a challenging arena for Britain considering our lack of facilities. However, it is undoubtedly possible to achieve medal success with quality organisational and performance systems alongside appropriate investment. And this is how we can achieve better results and move higher up the medal table.

Above all else, this report has highlighted that many of Britain's 2010 Winter Olympians are distinctly unhappy with their National Governing Bodies in most areas of operation. The Board, management, staff, and coaches need to have a long, frank and comprehensive look at themselves and humbly seek advice and guidance from other NGBs, from the BOA and from UK Sport, to get their houses in order. Athletes must take responsibility as well by communicating fully, accepting things will never be perfect, and offering their thoughts and potential solutions.

In line with this, the BOA and UK Sport must have a joined up strategy for Winter Sport, providing consistent guidance and expertise through a single contact, to help professionalise the NGBs and thereby provide athletes with the opportunity to deliver quality performances and results. They must collectively decide on clear roles for each organisation, stick to them, and deliver on them.

Another clear finding is that many Winter Olympians are not part of a Lottery Funded programme and are struggling financially. This is obviously not the route to improve results and medal haul, and in conjunction with more professional NGBs, needs to be addressed. Those athletes who are properly funded must step up to the plate, ensure a strong performance culture, and deliver when the big day arrives.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To Athletes

- Take more responsibility in terms of your representation and communication with your governing body, being helpful in identifying and overcoming some of the limitations.
- Learn to understand your individual requirements to become a realistic medal prospect, plan carefully, and then communicate this properly in order to gain the relevant access to your needs.
- Keep in mind that if you want funding, the Olympics are not about experience but about results and delivering your best on the biggest stage.

To National Governing Bodies

- Improve your interaction and communication with UK Sport, the BOA and other more successful sports, to develop the strategy, infrastructure and programming within your own sport. Thus building on your strengths while recognising your weaknesses and addressing them accordingly.
- Clarify funding requirements with UK Sport (for the sport, for APA's, for governance & for pathway), and then communicate these properly to the athletes, so each knows exactly what they have to do to be considered, and what the sport has to do as well.
- Ensure you get the best coaches currently available while developing your athletes to be the world-class coaches of the future.
- Improve communication, transparency and accountability so athletes are more involved in the decision-making process and are thus more aware of *why* certain decisions are made.

To the BAC

- Follow up on the recommendations in this report with the relevant stakeholders.
- Continue to work with sports and athletes to improve representation further.

To the BOA

- Through Athlete Services, provide some method whereby non-funded Olympians and potential Olympians can have local/regional medical and physiotherapy access
- Continue the excellent work at Preparation Camps and during the Olympic Games.
- Continue the positive start in helping to guide strategy following a comprehensive Winter Sports Review, and make a long-term commitment to this.
- Improve relations with UK Sport to work together on Winter Sport, having clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

To UK Sport

- Continue to fund winter sports according to their performance, funding all *improving* top 18 athletes from Vancouver and giving strategic performance indicators on the road to Sochi 2014, which must be met.
- Be more proactive in your involvement with winter governing bodies to facilitate positive change in structures, coaching and programmes.
- Provide a template for the winter NGBs and clarify the structures, operations, and performances required to achieve funding – in line with other sports.
- Employ a new Winter Sports Performance Consultant to aid and critique all winter sports and as a clear contact point.
- Improve relations with the BOA to work together on Winter Sport, having clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

To the Institutes of Sport

- Continue the quality support that is currently given and ensure you have good communication with the various sports in order to provide the best sport-specific support.

To Government

- Support for the summer sports in the run up to London 2012 is excellent. Demonstrate reasonable support for the Winter Olympic Team for Sochi 2014 and enable them to achieve historic results.

