

ANNUAL BENCHMARKING STRATEGY 2024

ENGLAND REGIONAL SQUAD

AND

ENGLAND NATIONAL SQUAD

DISCIPLINES;

Lead, Boulder, Speed

CATEGORIES;

Regional: Junior (U20), Youth A (U18), Youth B (U16) & Youth C
(U14)

National: Junior (U20), Youth A (U18) & Youth B (U16)

1. PURPOSE OF THE ANNUAL BENCHMARKING STRATEGY

- 1.1. To outline and describe the approach that GB Climbing, a department of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) will take in achieving the objectives of the England Squads.
- 1.2. Communicate with clarity the selection criteria, benchmarking standards and capabilities to athletes, parents, and primary coaches.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE ENGLAND SQUADS

2.1. England Regional Squad – Exposure and Education

- 2.1.1. For athletes to experience age and stage creative sessions where they are encouraged to ask purposeful questions, embrace new ideas and have high engagement.
- 2.1.2. To provide multiple opportunities to engage with coaches in a fun and supportive environment where athletes can make mistakes, experiment, and learn.
- 2.1.3. For athletes, parents, primary coaches and coaches to collaboratively develop a long-term Individual Athlete Development Plan (IADP).
- 2.1.4. Education in how health and wellbeing can positively support personal development.

2.2. England National Squad – Progress and Deliver

- 2.2.1. For athletes to receive high support so they can thrive in a competition or challenging climbing experience, take the learnings from it and deliver personal best performances.
- 2.2.2. For athletes to experience international competition standards in a supported training environment.
- 2.2.3. The squad will experience residential camps both in the UK and overseas to prepare for future competition performances, which includes travelling, training and competing as part of a team with GB Climbing Coaching support.

- 2.2.4. Athletes, parents and primary coaches will be introduced to a performance culture.
- 2.2.5. Embedding health and wellbeing at the core of an athlete's life.
- 2.2.6. Development of IADP including progressive multiyear goal setting and holistic development planning.

3. BOULDER/LEAD DISCIPLINES

- 3.1. Athletes selected to either squad are encouraged to participate in both boulder and lead disciplines regardless of their route of selection to each squad. It is in the interest of youth athlete development and injury prevention that athletes remain 'non-specialist' until at least U20 (Junior) age category
- 3.2. Consistent with 3.1. athletes selected to the England National Squad and so eligible for GB Climbing Team National Trials are eligible to attend selection events in both boulder and lead irrespective of their route of selection to the England National Squad.

4. SELECTION PROCESS

- 4.1. All current GB Climbing Team athletes will gain automatic selection into the England National Squad and are not required to make an application or attend England National Squad benchmarking.
- 4.2. Four Nations Series and YCS Grand Final
 - 4.2.1. Athletes who reach the final at any of the 2023 Nations Cups in any eligible age category, will receive an invitation to an England Regional Squad benchmarking event.
 - 4.2.2. Athletes who attend the 2023 YCS Grand Final in Upper Youth C and Youth B will accrue points for podium, final and top 10 finishes to support an application. See appendix 1 for the points criteria.

4.3. Stage 1; Application criteria

- 4.3.1. On achieving a minimum point total, athletes will be eligible to apply for selection to either the English Regional Squad or the English National Squad.
- 4.3.2. Points can be achieved through 2023 competition participation.
- 4.3.3. Points will only be accumulated in a single discipline. Points from one discipline cannot be added to another.
- 4.3.4. Please see Appendix 1 for how points are accrued.
- 4.3.5. Juniors and Youth A accrued total point score is less than Youth B to reflect that these athletes compete in senior categories in Tier 1 competitions. Youth B Tier 1 competitions are Junior events only, and Tier 2 is YCS competition.
- 4.3.6. Points; England Regional Squad

| Category in 2023 | Points required | Further Info |
|------------------|-----------------|--|
| Junior (lower) | 1500 | Reflective of athletes competing in Senior category competition. |
| Youth A | 1500 | |
| Youth B | 2500 | |
| Youth C | 2500 | |
| Youth D (upper) | 2500 | |

4.3.7. Points, England National Squad

| Category in 2023 | Points required | Further Info |
|------------------|-----------------|--|
| Junior (lower) | 2500 | Reflective of athletes competing in Senior category competition. |
| Youth A | 2500 | |
| Youth B | 4000 | |
| Youth C (upper) | 4000 | |

4.4. Stage 2 – Benchmarking Event Selection Criteria

4.4.1. Boulder and Lead: Overview of the criteria which will be used in the selection decision making process;

| Selection Criteria | Description |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Benchmarking Standard | Age and Stage Benchmarking Standards will be aligned national finals competition standards for the relevant age and stage. Benchmarking Standards – see section 5 |
| Coach Benchmarking Observations | Coach's independent responses to predetermined key benchmarking observations. These will be in the form of questions and will be communicated to athletes prior to taking part in the benchmarking event. |

4.4.2. Coach Observations,

4.4.2.1. Coaches' will record ratings in response to standard future potential questions at the National Benchmarking event 2024.

4.4.2.2. Coaches will provide a rating of either Initiating, Developing, Competent, Highly Skilful or Excellent in response to a set of standard questions referring to skills that they see demonstrated by the athletes at the Benchmark event.

4.4.2.3. The ratings are defined as:

| Score | Level | Description |
|-------|-----------------------|--|
| 0 | <i>Initiating</i> | Basic competitive skills exhibited but not able to deliver a performance. |
| 1-3 | <i>Development</i> | State of growth, incomplete ability and/or knowledge to execute a performance, not able to deliver a performance under pressure. |
| 3-6 | <i>Competent</i> | Has some of the ability and/or knowledge to execute a performance, only partially able to deliver a performance under pressure. |
| 6-8 | <i>Highly Skilled</i> | Has the ability and knowledge to execute a performance, although is inconsistent under pressure |
| 9-10 | <i>Excellent</i> | Has the ability to deliver a whole performance under pressure, delivering every time regardless of the standard and style. |

4.4.2.4. Both criteria will be considered as part of the decision-making process with coach observations recording a minimum mode of competence.

4.5. Stage 2 - Benchmarking Standards and Capabilities by discipline

4.5.1. Guideline standards and capabilities given for England National squad to inform expectations regarding the standard of the program activity and to illustrate the progression from England Regional Squad.

4.5.2. Lead Climbing: Grade Set. It is common for the grade and degree of difficulty to increase from qualification, semi-final and final, the grade range shown is that set at the respective events indicated. These grades have been reached through athlete, coach and route-setter insights and data analysis over the 2021, 2022 and 2023 seasons, and there as a guide. There are nuances of style that also need to be considered, although these are more difficult to quantitatively describe for lead routes.

4.5.3. Lead Climbing Performance Standard. The world level is increasing year on year. The world's best athletes in each age category will consistently climb 90-100% of the routes set. Through our insights and analysis, the performance standard illustrated indicates the average percentage of route height to achieve round progression.

4.5.4. Lead Climbing Route setting, is not an exact science. Athletes need to be prepared to compete on a variety of styles such as traditional, endurance, technical, boulder style of routes. Every effort will be made to ensure IFSC route styles are set at the benchmarking event. Misalignment can occur resulting in a route being too hard or too easy despite clear briefs on the grades and styles to be set. The nomination and selection panels can implement discretionary tolerances dependent on the ranking of the athletes and the performance standards achieved across the athlete group. Particularly if athletes of proven National competition finals standard

do not achieve the performance standard set, or similarly if significantly more athletes achieve the performance standard set.

This likely indicates that the standard of the route is not quite right.

4.5.5. Male Lead

| Male / Category | European Competition European Cup & European Youth Championship | | England National Squad | | England Regional Squad | | Further Info |
|-----------------|--|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| | Grade Set | % route height achieved | Grade Set | % route height achieved | Grade Set | % route height achieved | |
| Junior (U20) | 8b+ - 8c+ | 75% | 8b - 8b+ | ≥80% | 8a+-8b | ≥80% | Working towards Consistently on-sighting / flashing routes at the grades listed, on varied terrain in a range of climates. |
| Youth A (U18) | 8b+-8c | 75% | 8b - 8b+ | | 8a+-8b | | |
| Youth B (U16) | 8a+ - 8b | 75% | 8a -8a+ | | 7c+-8a | | |
| Youth C (U14) | | | | | 7c+-8a | | |
| Youth D Upper | | | | | 7a-7c+ | >70% | |

4.5.6. Female Lead

| Female / Category | European Competition European Cup & European | | England National Squad | | England Regional Squad | | Further Info |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| | Grade | Height of route climbed | Grade | Height of route climbed | Grade | Height of route climbed | |
| Junior (U20) | 8a - 8b | 80% | 8a - 8a+ | ≥ 80% | 7c+-8a | ≥ 80% | Working towards Consistently on-sighting / flashing routes at the grades listed, on varied terrain in a range of climates. |
| Youth A (U18) | 8a - 8b | 80% | 7c+ - 8a+ | | 7c-7c+ | | |
| Youth B (U16) | 8a - 8b | 80% | 7c+ - 8a | | 7c-7c+ | | |
| Youth C (U14) | | | | | 7b+ -7c+ | | |
| Youth D Upper | | | | | 6c-7b+ | >70% | |

- 4.5.7. Boulder Grade Set. It is common for the grade and degree of difficulty to increase from qualification, semi-final and final, therefore the grade range provides an overview of the grades set across the rounds at the respective events indicated. These grades have been reached through athlete, coaches and route-setter insights and data analysis over the 2021, 2022 and 2023 seasons. and there as a guide. There is nuances of style that also need to be considered. Although these are more difficult to quantify and describe, the boulder problem styles that athletes need to be prepared to compete on including Power, Co-ordination, Balance, Complex.
- 4.5.8. Boulder Performance Standard. The world level is increasing year on year. The world's best athletes in each age category will consistently achieve 5 Tops / 5 Zones of the boulders set in qualification. Through our insights and analysis, the standard illustrated indicates the average Tops and Zones that put an athlete in the round progression zone.
- 4.5.9. Boulder setting, is not an exact science. Misalignment can occur resulting in the problems being too hard or too easy despite clear briefs on the grades and styles to be set. The nomination and selection panels can implement discretionary tolerances dependent on the ranking of the athletes and the performance standards achieved across the athlete group. Particularly if athletes of proven National competition finals standard do not achieve the performance standard set, or similarly if significantly more athletes achieve the performance standard set. This likely indicates that the standard of the route is not quite right.

4.5.10. Male Boulder

| Male / Category | European Competition European Cup & European Youth Championship | | England National Squad | | England Regional Squad | | Further Info |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| | Grade Set | Top / Zone to make round progression | Grade Set | Top / Zone to make round progression | Grade Set | Top / Zone to make round progression | |
| Junior (U20) | V8 – V10 | 2 Tops 5 Zones | ≥V8 | 3+ Tops 3+ Zones | ≥V7 | 4+ Tops 6 Zones | <p>Working towards Consistently achieving 'tops' at the grade range listed, in a 6 boulder, 4–5-minute rotation competition format, across a range of styles, on varied terrain and in a range of climates.</p> <p>Boulder styles include: Power, Co-ordination, Balance, Complex*</p> |
| Youth A (U18) | V7 – V10 | 2 Tops 4 Zones | ≥ V7 | | ≥V6 | | |
| Youth B (U16) | V6 – V8 | 3 Tops 4 Zones | ≥ V6 | 2+ Tops 3+ Zones | ≥V5 | 5+ Tops 6 Zones | |
| Youth C (U14) | | | | | ≥V5 | 4+ Tops 4+ Zones | |
| Youth D Upper | | | | | >V4 | 4+ Tops 4+ Zones | |

4.5.11. Female Boulder

| Female / Category | European Competition European Cup & European Youth Championship | | England National Squad | | England Regional Squad | | Further Info |
|-------------------|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| | Grade Set | Top / Zone to make round progression | Grade Set | Top / Zone to make round progression | Grade Set | Top / Zone to make round progression | |
| Junior (U20) | V8 – V11 | 2 Tops 4 Zones | ≥V8 | 3+ Tops 3+ Zones | ≥V7 | 4+ Tops 6 Zones | <p>Working towards Consistently achieving 'tops' at the grade range listed, in a 6 boulder, 4–5-minute rotation competition format, across a range of styles, on varied terrain and in a range of climates.</p> <p>Boulder styles include: Power, Co-ordination, Balance, Complex*</p> |
| Youth A (U18) | V7 – V10 | 2 Tops 4 Zones | ≥ V7 | | ≥V6 | | |
| Youth B (U16) | V6 – V8 | 2-3 Tops 4-6 Zones | ≥ V6 | 2+ Tops 3+ Zones | ≥V5 | 5+ Tops 6 Zones | |
| Youth C (U14) | | | | | ≥V5 | 4+ Tops 4+ Zones | |
| Youth D Upper | | | | | >V4 | 4+ Tops 4+ Zones | |

4.5.12. Boulder Style overview

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Power | Boulder requires the application of force/strength at speed. |
| Co-ordination | Boulder requires the minimisation of pauses and smooth transition between dynamic movements. |
| Balance | Boulder which requires precise movements with often a commitment to weighting of the feet. |
| Complex | A boulder that demands a high level of technical expertise and movement skills. |

4.5.13. Male Speed

| Male / Category | European Competition European Cup & European Youth Championship | | England National Squad | | England Regional Squad | | Further Info |
|-----------------|--|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---|
| | Knockout round progression | Performance Standard | Performance Potential | Performance Standard | Performance Potential | Performance Standard | |
| Junior (U20) | 6.3 seconds | 6.6 seconds | 7.5 sec | 6.9 sec | 7.7 sec | 7.2 sec | Working toward consistently deliver against performance standard times in competition format. |
| Youth A (U18) | 6.6 seconds | 6.9 seconds | 7.8 sec | 7.2 sec | 8 sec | 7.5 sec | |
| Youth B (U16) | 8.0 seconds | 8.3 seconds | 9.1 sec | 8.6 sec | 9.5 sec | 9.0 sec | |

4.5.14. Female Speed

| Female / Category | European Competition European Cup & European Youth Championship | | England National Squad | | England Regional Squad | | Further Info |
|-------------------|--|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---|
| | Knockout round progression | Performance Standard | Performance Potential | Performance Standard | Performance Potential | Performance Standard | |
| Junior (U20) | 9.5 seconds | 9.8 seconds | 10.6 sec | 10.1 sec | 10.9 sec | 10.4 sec | Working toward consistently deliver against performance standard times in competition format. |
| Youth A (U18) | 9.8 seconds | 10.1 seconds | 11 sec | 10.5 sec | 11.4 sec | 10.9 sec | |
| Youth B (U16) | 10.1 seconds | 10.4 seconds | 11.2 sec | 10.7 sec | 11.5 sec | 11.0 sec | |

5. CAMPAIGN PRINCIPLES

5.1. The campaign principles encompass the values of Health, Performance, Respect to ensure the health and safety of all who participate in program activity.

5.2. BMC Event approval and GB Climbing campaign principles.

5.2.1. For all training and competition events GB Climbing completes the BMC Event Approval process. Details of this process can be found here: <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/organising-bmc-events>

5.2.2. In addition, GB Climbing also applies its campaign principles which must be satisfied for GB Climbing to deliver program activity.

5.2.3. A traffic light system is used to determine the status of both preparation and risk.

5.2.4. If majority of items are GREEN – Program activity will take place.

5.2.5. If the majority of items are RED or AMBER – GB Climbing will liaise with the Chair of the Competition Climbing Performance Group (CCPG) to review and determine if program activity can go ahead.

5.2.6. GB Climbing acknowledges that three of the four items linked to “Respect” in the table below are outside of athletes control and are the responsibility of GB Climbing to deliver. If GB Climbing has been unable to deliver these items athletes should not be disadvantaged. If these circumstances occur there will be discussion between GB Climbing, athletes and parents to explore if there are any solutions available to enable athlete participation regardless of these items not being delivered/in place.

5.3. Health

5.3.1. Athletes in the England National Squad must comply with GB Climbing Medical Policies including minimum BMI. Policies to be updated and released by 31st October 2023. This requirement does not apply to England Regional Squad members though for athlete health it

is recommended that they also adhere to the minimum BMI levels referenced. BMI is used to monitor athlete health and the risk of Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-S). For further details please see;

5.3.1.1. BMC GB Climbing Welfare Support Plan

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/gb-climbing-welfare-support-plan>

5.3.1.2. IFSC BMI Screening Procedure Rules https://cdn.ifsc-climbing.org/images/ifsc/Footer/Commissions/220215_BMI_Screening_Procedure_Rules_final.pdf

5.3.1.3. Athletes who are on a UK Sport named athlete program or on the Talent Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) program are able to access medical support.

5.4. Performance

5.4.1. If attendance at any program activity is deemed to pose an unacceptable risk to an athlete and/or support staff health, performance aims or the BMC reputation, the BMC may not approve the activity.

5.4.2. Standards and Capabilities:

5.4.2.1. Standards and capabilities are to safeguard athletes and ensure that the standard of program activity is appropriate to their age and stage.

5.4.2.2. If an athlete is not yet at the standard of the program activity it is unlikely that the event will serve as a development experience for the athlete.

5.5. Respect

5.5.1. Athletes are required to engage in programs activity, which includes the development of their IADP to ensure that coaches and staff are able to support athletes at program activity.

5.5.2. Athletes, parents, primary coaches, BMC and GB Climbing staff all abide by fair play rules, and the BMC code of conduct.

5.5.3. Athletes, parents and primary coaches commit to communicating in an open, honest and transparent manner, abiding by deadlines set and engaging respectfully with BMC / GB Climbing through all correspondence and communication.

5.5.4. GB Climbing commits to engaging with athletes, parents and primary coaches in an open, honest and transparent manner, and commits to making every possible effort to respect deadlines and ensure these are met.

5.6. Logistics and Travel

5.6.1. The ability to tolerate/mitigate against travel constraints is an important aspect of program activity.

5.6.2. While supporting athletes development it is also important for the NGB to consider the safety and welfare of both athletes and staff in reference to global travel. Travel presents various risks ranging from exposure to seasonal viruses, meteorological disturbances and political issues which must be considered.

5.7. Funding

5.7.1. GB Climbing arranges travel and logistics for all program activity and athletes, coaches and support staff travel together.

5.7.2. Athletes selected to the England Squads are required to self-fund.

5.7.2.1. Athletes in Home Nations Squads can apply to SportsAid, SportsAid Cymru and Backing the Best (subject to household income) via the BMC once per year, for financial support for training and competition costs.

5.7.2.2. Athletes can also apply to local authorities and charities for grants independently. GB Climbing will support this process at an athlete's request.

6. CAMPAIGN PRINCIPLES TRAFFIC LIGHT RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS (IN ADDITION TO BMC EVENT APPROVAL)

- 6.1. Red rating – The event is likely to present a risk to athlete performance and health triggering further assessment with the Head of Performance.
- 6.2. Amber rating - Indicate the minimum level of preparation required for program activity. Further management measures are identified and built into activity planning to mitigate the impact.
- 6.3. Green rating - No further action required.

7. ATHLETE HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE

- 7.1. GB Climbing is developing an athlete health action plan that will evolve our athlete health key principle. This table outlines the current traffic light areas or considerations for athletes. Where there is a Red or Amber rating, athletes will be supported through their IADP to develop a clear action plan.

| Guiding Principle | Item | Inadequate | Adequate | Optimal |
|-------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Health | Comply with GB Climbing Medical Policies | Not complied with GB Climbing Medical Policies and/or not cleared as fit to compete | Complied with GB Climbing Medical Policies and cleared as fit to compete | |
| | Injury Status | Athlete injured and unable to compete. | Athlete managing injury, but able to compete | Athlete Injury free and able to compete at the standard. |
| Performance | Readiness to compete confirmed through section process | Not achieved selection. | Achieved selection, but standard not at level of competition. | Achieved selection and at standard of competition |
| | Staff in attendance | 1 staff or coach | 2 x Coach + Support Staff | 2 x Coach, Support Staff, MDT staff (Physio and or medical) |

8. Respect

8.1. GB Climbing will implement a defined camps and competition programme in 2024, with a new IADP process and camps pre-season programme. This will include the development of optimizing athlete competition road maps to support athlete's development towards their long-term goals.

| Guiding Principle | Item | Inadequate | Adequate | Optimal |
|-------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Respect | Pre-season programs Delivery | No pre-season programs delivered | Pre-season program delivered and satisfactory athlete engagement. | Pre-season program delivered and 100% athlete engagement. |
| | Athlete IADP | No IADP plan in place | Annual IADP in place | Collaborative and adaptive multi-year IADP |
| | Funding | Not a priority event for GB Climbing and unable to finance event coaches and staffing. | The event is not a priority event for GB Climbing. By agreement we will review attendance, Athletes could be asked to contribute to the coach/support expenses to attend. | Event is a priority event for GB Climbing. Athletes are self-funded GB Climbing funds coach/support staff expenses. |
| | Assessment of host Nation's safety status | Travel not advised by government and/or developing political situation. | No travel restrictions and no developing situations reported. | |

Appendix 1

The table 1 illustrates age group eligible competitions and their tier level. Whilst table 2 illustrates the points available per tier and the competition results achieved.

Please note that the Tier 1 for Junior and Youth A includes Senior competition. Whilst Youth B events are Junior only.

Table 1: Competition tiers per category, see **table 3** for category year of birth.

| Category | Tier 1 | Tier 2 |
|-----------------|---------------|---|
| Junior (lower) | BBC BLCC | JBBC JBLCC Four Nations Cup Series (up to best 2 results) |
| Youth A | BBC BLCC | JBBC JBLCC Four Nations Cup Series (up to best 2 results) |
| Youth B | JBBC JBLCC | Four Nations Cup Series (up to best 2 results) YCS Grand Final |
| Youth C | JBBC JBLCC | Four Nations Cup Series (up to best 2 results) YCS Grand Final |
| Youth D (upper) | JBBC JBLCC | Four Nations Cup Series (up to best 2 results) YCS Grand Final |

**(BBC- British Bouldering Championships, BLCC- British Lead Climbing Championships, JBBC- Junior British Bouldering Championships, JBLCC- Junior British Lead Climbing Championships, YCS- Youth Climbing Series)*

Table 2: Points available

| Junior & Youth A | Podium | Final | Top 10 | Semi-final | Lower end of age category in 2023 Junior (2005) Youth A (2007) |
|------------------|--------|-------|--------|------------|--|
| Tier 1 | 3500 | 3000 | 1500 | 750 | Plus 25% |
| Tier 2 | 2500 | 2000 | 1000 | 500 | |

Youth B scoring system reflects that Youth B athletes only compete against their peers, and therefore will require to accumulate more points for consideration.

| Youth B | Podium | Final | Top 10 | Lower end of age category in 2023 Youth B (2009) |
|---------|--------|-------|--------|--|
| Tier 1 | 3000 | 2500 | 1000 | Plus 25% |
| Tier 2 | 2000 | 1500 | 500 | |

Youth C

| Youth C/ Youth D (Upper) | Podium | Final | Top 10 |
|--------------------------|--------|-------|--------|
| Tier 1 | 3000 | 2500 | 1000 |
| Tier 2 | 2000 | 1500 | 500 |

Table 3: Age Group Categories

| Year of Event | Year of Birth | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| | Youth D | | Youth C | | Youth B | | Youth A | | Junior | |
| | Lower | Upper | Lower | Upper | Lower | Upper | Lower | Upper | Lower | Upper |
| 2023 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | 2004 |
| 2024 | 2014 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 |
| 2025 | 2015 | 2014 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 |