

# ANNUAL BENCHMARKING STRATEGY



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## WHO IS IT FOR?

This document relates to the following groups.

- ▶ England Regional Squad
- ▶ England National Squad

This document relates to the following disciplines.

- ▶ Lead
- ▶ Boulder
- ▶ Speed

This document relates to the following 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.
    - 4.3.3.1. If points are accrued via the YCS Grand Final, they can be added to either lead or boulder scores.
  - 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 4.5.5 to 4.5.14.
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	Initiating	Basic competitive skills exhibited but not able to deliver a performance.
1-3	Development	State of growth, incomplete ability and/or knowledge to execute a performance, not able to deliver a performance under pressure.
3-6	Competent	Has some of the ability and/or knowledge to execute a performance, only partially able to deliver a performance under pressure.
6-8	Highly Skilled	Has the ability and knowledge to execute a performance, although is inconsistent under pressure
9-10	Excellent	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 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)	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 are 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	
	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
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
<b>Further Info</b>	Working towards consistently achieving ‘tops’ at the grade range listed, in a six boulder, 4–5-minute rotation competition format across a range of styles, on varied terrain and in a range of climates.  <b>Boulder styles include: Power, Coordination, Balance, Complex</b>					

## 4.5.11. Female Boulder

Female / Category	European Competition European Cup & European Youth Championship		England National Squad		England Regional Squad	
	Grade Set	Top / Zone to make round progression	Grade Set	% route height achieved	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
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
<b>Further Info</b>	<p>Working towards consistently achieving ‘tops’ at the grade range listed, in a six boulder, 4–5-minute rotation competition format across a range of styles, on varied terrain and in a range of climates.</p> <p><b>Boulder styles include: Power, Coordination, Balance, Complex</b></p>					

## 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 sec	6.6 sec	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 sec	6.9 sec	7.8 sec	7.2 sec	8 sec	7.5 sec	
Youth B (U16)	8.0 sec	8.3 sec	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 sec	9.8 sec	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 sec	10.1 sec	11 sec	10.5 sec	11.4 sec	10.9 sec	
Youth B (U16)	10.1 sec	10.4 sec	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 an athletes’ control and are the responsibility of the BMC and GB Climbing. GB climbing will make every effort to deliver these items in collaboration with athletes, parents, and primary coaches to not disadvantage athletes in their development and competition opportunities. GB Climbing will facilitate discussion with athletes and parents to explore if there are any solutions available should there be difficulties in satisfying all items that may be part of an individual athlete’s development plan (IADP).
- 5.3. Supporting athletes and ensuring their health and well-being are the foundations of GB Climbing and the England Squad programmes it delivers. Athletes require various forms of support, and the GB Climbing Athlete Health Policy will play a crucial role in safeguarding athletes’ physical and mental health.
- 5.3.1. Current procedures can be found in the BMC GB Climbing Welfare Support Plan <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/gb-climbing-welfare-support-plan>
  - 5.3.2. The GB Climbing Athlete Health Policy is in development and will be available by 31 Jan 2024.
  - 5.3.3. The IFSC have a Body Mass Index Screening Procedure Rules to monitor athlete health and the risk of Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-S). For further details please see;
    - 5.3.3.1. IFSC BMI Screening Procedure Rules [https://cdn.ifsc-climbing.org/images/ifsc/Footer/Commissions/220215\\_BMI\\_Screenig\\_Procedure\\_Rules\\_final.pdf](https://cdn.ifsc-climbing.org/images/ifsc/Footer/Commissions/220215_BMI_Screenig_Procedure_Rules_final.pdf)
  - 5.3.4. 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

Note: This 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 Policy 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 Athlete Health and Policy 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

## ANNUAL BENCHMARKING STRATEGY



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:

- ▶ Tier 1 for Junior and Youth A includes Senior competition.
- ▶ Youth B events are Junior only.

### COMPETITION TIERS

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

**Table 1:** Competition tiers per category

- ▶ BBC British Bouldering Championships
- ▶ BLCC British Lead Climbing Championships
- ▶ JBBC Junior British Bouldering Championships
- ▶ JBLCC Junior British Lead Climbing Championships,
- ▶ YCS Youth Climbing Series

# APPENDIX 1

## ANNUAL BENCHMARKING STRATEGY



### 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	

**Table 2:** Points available | Junior & Youth A

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	

**Table 3:** Points available | Youth B

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

**Table 4:** Points available | Youth C

	Podium	Top 10	Reaching Grand Final
YCS Grand Final	2000	1500	500

**Table 5:** Points available | YCS Grand Final

### 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
<b>2023</b>	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
<b>2024</b>	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
<b>2025</b>	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006

**Table 6:** Age Group Categories