# Annual Report 2020-2021

The British Wrestling Academy, 41 Great Clowes Street, Salford, Greater Manchester M7 1RQ | Registered in England & Wales: 4190868
**Phone:** +44 (0)161 835 2112 **Email:** admin@britishwrestling.org

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## Chairs Report

Welcome to our Annual Report and my first for British Wrestling. I would like to open by thanking Jem for his service to the Association as Chair and his tremendous contribution to the sport. I know that many members appreciated his work behind the scenes ensuring we had the right leadership to take us forward.

I am looking forward to the opportunities and challenges which Wrestling will bring and aim to use my 8 years' experience at GB Boxing as Chair to improve participation, performance and ultimately the success of our athletes at all levels from club to national representation.

The effect of Covid-19 on our members, their families and friends, our volunteers, clubs and staff cannot have been profound. We all know of friends and colleagues who have had to bear desperately sad life changing situations.

Within our own sport we have seen the negative effect of this virus in so many ways. I know that this has been at times an almost impossible task to face into, ensuring that we can come out of this period ready to get back to the mat and satisfy the pent-up demand from our members. Also, I want to recognise our clubs and their team members have had to make tremendous sacrifices to remain in our sport.

The Board has had a full agenda as we are entering the Paris Cycle after the delayed Tokyo Olympics, and this has allowed the Board to review the strategy for our sport and seek additional funding to make us more competitive at all levels. This enabled us to step back and examine all our structures and processes. Our new strategy has been approved by the Board and will be communicated during the remainder of 2021 and 2022.

During the year the Board has ensured that the BWA continues to promote the sport and in cooperation with other publicly funded combat sports found a safe way to return to the mat. We managed to retain training opportunities for the Elite team once the green light was given by Government and since the middle of this year we are slowly returning to a more normal rhythm. The Digital Transformation Project which is directed at improving our communications, event management and membership administration has been delivered with a much better experience at our competitions. We continue to progress our planned redevelopment of our Academy in Salford which provides the sport with a home and once completed a venue which will properly reflect the aspirations we have for its success.

There is much to do in terms of creating a compelling membership experience ensuring that existing and potential members recognise the benefit of being part of the BWA family. We have revamped the competition framework and over the year a new performance pathway will be developed to ensure that we have an open and transparent way of helping our athletes to progress in our sport.

Throughout the year Craig and the BWA team have continued to work tirelessly to help our members in whatever way they could. We have been successful in attracting additional funding for Wrestling form UK Sport and Sport England

The outlook for this year is still muted by the continuing effects of the pandemic and restrictions but there are positives we can look forward to with the Home Nations having the Commonwealth Games clearly in their sights.

I would like to finish by thanking all our volunteers for their tremendous work over the year and their laser focus on supporting our members and lastly my appreciation to each of our wrestlers and their supporters and families who are as always at the centre of our efforts.,

The BWA is ready to support you as we hopefully pass through this pandemic into a more predictable world, and I thank you for your continuing membership.

Steven Esom
British Wrestling Chair

## Chief Executive Comments

2020, what to say about a year where we spent most if not all our time not wrestling. It was an incredibly challenging year for all our members, volunteers, coaches, and clubs. It is testament to their spirit, resilience, and passion that wrestling has picked itself up off the mat and got back in the fight as the pandemic has loosened its grip.

The impact of the pandemic hit hard across the wrestling family and it important to remember and pay tribute to those loved ones lost during this time.

Centrally the Association was fortunate to be offered reassurance and continuity by our key funding partners Sport England and UK Sport to enable us to maintain our operations through the year. Coupled with government support for the Academy building meant that the Association stayed in a stable position through one of the most economically challenging times.

The pandemic severely impacted on grassroots participation, and we saw that reflected in the membership figures across the country. This has highlighted to us the need to improve and develop our membership offer so that everyone truly feels part of the wrestling family.

The coronavirus restrictions meant a change in the way we work as an association, stimulating changes in communications and coaching qualifications among other areas. From talent perspective we were placed in an incredibly challenging position of having to restrict opportunities for our young talented athletes whilst supporting those who met the governments elite sportsperson criteria to continue to train and prepare for major international competitions. This balance proved difficult and there are certainly lessons for us to learn in communication, which we will do and aim to be better in future.

Indeed, reflecting on our new strategy launched recently and the values that we hold I want to highlight that we will continue to be brave in our thinking and decision making but we will also admit where we can be better, learn from our mistakes and work with you to learn, grow and develop.

With new opportunities presenting themselves to us in the form of renewed support from Sport England and UK Sport as well as the excitement of a Commonwealth Games just around the corner I hope we can work together to grow this fantastic sport to the level we all aspire to.

Craig Anthony
British Wrestling Chief Executive

## Governance

The Board met six times during the year using a mixture of face to face and online meetings.

In October 2020 Steven Esom was appointed as Chair and as such became a director. Steven is an experienced chair and Board member of a number of consumer-facing organisations and has been the Chair of GB Boxing since 2013. Other business he chairs includes SEDEX, Andrews Property Group and the Advantage Travel Partnership and currently a non-Exec director at the Rank Group. His executive career included a Board position at Marks & Spencer prior to that Managing Director of Waitrose, rapidly expanding the business and leading the successful repositioning of Waitrose as a national fresh food retailer, and a member of the John Lewis Partnership Board, before joining the Partnership, Steven spent most of his career at Sainsbury's in commercial roles.

In December 2020 British Wrestling welcomed Derek Redmond onto the board as an Additional Non-Executive Director with expertise in performance sport. Derek is well known to many as an elite athlete having competed at the highest level in athletics winning Gold in the relay at the 1991 World Championships. Famously Derek was helped to the finish by his father after tearing his hamstring as he passed the 250m mark. Derek went on to compete in basketball and rugby 7s. Derek now works as a motivational speaker working with high profile brands delivering his inspiring stories from the track into corporate environments.

The Board also commissioned an external board evaluation as required by the code for sports governance. Compliance with the code is a requirement of funding and British Wrestling is committed to improving good governance in all areas. The report was on the whole very positive, below is the summary findings from the report.

*The evaluation found that British Wrestling has a highly skilled and generally well-functioning Board, which operates as a relatively cohesive group and exhibits positive culture and behaviours. The Board is supported by governance policies and procedures which are largely effective. The Board performs well in what are undoubtedly challenging circumstances, with the impact of Covid-19restrictions felt throughout the organisation, severely limiting active participation in the sport in the last year. There is near unanimous agreement that there have been significant improvements in British Wrestling in recent times under a new CEO and now a new Chair, with optimism for the future. It is clear that the CEO is held in high regard and that the Board has highly positive first impressions of the Chair. The collective achievement should not be underestimated but the team needs to be "fighting fit" if it is to harness its potential and make a real and long-lasting impact on the sport.*

*Board members are generally satisfied with and confident about many important aspects of the performance of the Board, such as its willingness to engage in open and frank conversation, the fact that each individual Board member feels they have the opportunity to contribute and be listened to, and how remote meetings have been handled.*

*The commitment of the Board members to British Wrestling came across strongly in all of the interactions. The organisation is fortunate to have such a knowledgeable and dedicated group of people to lead it towards its goals.*

The evaluation also produced a list of recommendations which the Board is working towards.

## Welfare

British Wrestling has maintained its Green status with the Child Protection in Sport Unit and continues to put Welfare and Safeguarding of all its participants and members at the heart of what we do. Barry Pollin was appointed as Lead Safeguarding Officer for the Association and maintained the Improvement Plan supported by Andreas Michaelas as Deputy Lead Safeguarding Officer

## Diversity

The British Wrestling Association is committed to supporting diversity in both management and membership.

Diversity is at the heart of successful inter-actions in all walks of life. It is of paramount importance to take into consideration everyone's views and take advantage of the varied backgrounds and experiences which give rise to those views. British Wrestling is reaching out to all to come and take part in a great sport. At a management level this means ensuring that our board and governance bodies reflect the diversity of our sport.

| | 2020-21 | 2019-20 | 2018-19 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Board Female | 33% | 33% | 33% |
| Board Male | 66% | 66% | 66% |
| Board members from ethnically diverse communities | 33% | 22% | 22% |

# Finance

## Sports Council

In total income from sports councils increased in 2020-21 with British Wrestling securing additional funds to support additional projects including digital transformation and governance. Sport England continued to fund British Wrestling activities in 2020-21. Throughout the pandemic Sport England offered British Wrestling flexibility and support to ensure that the Association maintained a solid financial status and was able to adapt to the situation. UK Sport funding which supports our elite athletes continued to be utilised once dispensation for training and competition for elite athletes was secured.

| | 2020-21 | 2019-20 | 2018-19 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sports Council Grants | 313,252 | 273,706 | 245,650 |

British Wrestling generates income from a variety of sources the majority of which is restricted for use in designated ways such as those from Sports Councils. Significant amounts are processed as money in, money out in the operations of the sport including competitions and talent and performance activities. Income fell significantly this year with the pandemic significantly impacting on wrestling activity meaning that traditional sources of income. Government grants to support the business ensured that overall income did not fall below sustainable levels.

| | 2020-21 | 2019-20 | 2018-19 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Income from Membership | 8,675 | 27,321 | 25,414 |
| Athlete Contributions | -325 | 31,380 | 23,979 |
| Courses | 3,673 | 15,474 | 17,303 |
| Wrestling Academy | 1,723 | 13,521 | 13,846 |
| Competition Income | 12 | 24,633 | 34,831 |
| Other – Sponsorship/Donations | 23,790 | 18,354 | 11,182 |
| Covid Grants | 47,400 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **84,948** | **130,683** | **128,573** |

## Surplus/Loss

British Wrestling recorded a surplus on the year of £38,104, supported by reduced outgoings and grants to support activities.

| | 2020-21 | 2019-20 | 2018-19 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Turnover | 398,200 | 406,638 | 370,622 |
| Surplus/(loss) | 38,104 | 22,407 | (-35,666) |

## Membership and Affiliation

Membership and affiliation were severely hit by the coronavirus pandemic restrictions

### Membership numbers

Membership fell from 1970 at the start of the year to 515 in March 2021 due to the restrictions.

### Diversity

British Wrestling is committed to supporting diversity in our membership and we have identified three key areas of measurement to measure the impact of this commitment. There is work to be done both on the data collection but British Wrestling recognises the need to focus on these areas to support membership growth of a diverse and well-rounded sport.

| | 2020-21 | 2019-20 | 2018-19 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ethnically diverse communities | 40% | 40% | 45% |
| Female | 30% | 14% | 10% |
| Lower Socio-Economic Groups | 55% | 50% | 56% |

The significant reduction overall numbers due to the pandemic means that the percentage measures have limited value. British Wrestling focused on engaging with clubs during the pandemic, supporting them to access funding and providing advice on engaging with members.

## Academy

The British Wrestling Academy, Salford suffered from the pandemic with the facility closed full time until elite sport dispensation enabled us to begin with a small number of elite athletes and coaches. The facility was opened following covid secure guidance on a weekly basis for a small number of athletes and on a monthly basis for senior squad athletes to train.

On resumption of education activities, the building welcomed back the Manchester Salafi School and on the opening up for socially distanced activities the facility maintained covid secure environment for City of Manchester wrestling club.

## Development

During the Covid19 pandemic, British Wrestling continued working throughout the pandemic. Due to the slow down in activity, British Wrestling were able to focus on the foundations of the sport. This lead to better preparing it for reopening and the focus on supporting the growth of the sport.

## Club Affiliation

Whilst the pandemic saw a significant drop in membership, club affiliation remained strong and a number of clubs found the time afforded through lockdown to fulfil the necessary requirements for affiliation. During 2020, Affiliated clubs grew to 34 and there are an additional 8 Associate clubs that are a combination of multisport facilities, multisport or clubs working towards affiliation. In total we had 42 wrestling clubs that we worked with throughout 2020.

## Club Support

Throughout the difficult time wrestling faced being effectively shut down. British Wrestling worked to keep in communication with all our Club Administrators through our Development Manager. Support was offered through various methods including virtual meetings, calls and emails. Also a large portion of the support came from British Wrestling's push through its new digital transformation into communications.

## Communication

As part of the Sport England Digital Transformation Project, British Wrestling was able to modernise into the communication realm. As part of this BWA improved its communications through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, The Wrestling Takedown Newsletter and the Website.

During the 2020/21 period, BWA developed a communication strategy to have a structured direction for the governing body. This lead to the creation of branded communication material to specific social media campaigns in each area of BWA including membership, clubs, competitions, education and the community. Examples of this include the 'Featured Club of the Week'.

## Club Resources

As part of the communication strategy, British Wrestling created club resources to best support the reopening process for wrestling clubs. The website was updated with resources around the basics of club set up, support and affiliation, structure and governance, wrestling programmes and example projects, funding advice, facilities and equipment and additional support. Material resources were also created to support clubs in reopening with socially distanced activity through a 'Ready to Wrestle?' campaign

## The Wrestling Takedown Newsletter

British Wrestling continued to look for better ways to keep in its membership up to date. A consistent suggestion from various partners was a monthly newsletter. October 2020 saw the launch of the Wrestling Takedown newsletter with an initial reader base of 726 and grew to 846 by March 2021. The main aim of the newsletter is to keep the membership up to date with the latest news and happenings going on at the governing body.

## This Girl Can Wrestle

Through the 2020/2021 period, British Wrestling worked with our partners at 'Wrestle Like a Girl' to formulate an online female participation programme called 'This Girl Can Wrestle'. The programmes aim was to retain and grow our female participation base from before the pandemic and grow our exposure to the general main stream that the sport of wrestling is not just a male sport. The programme was successful in drawing in 102 female participants through various partners.

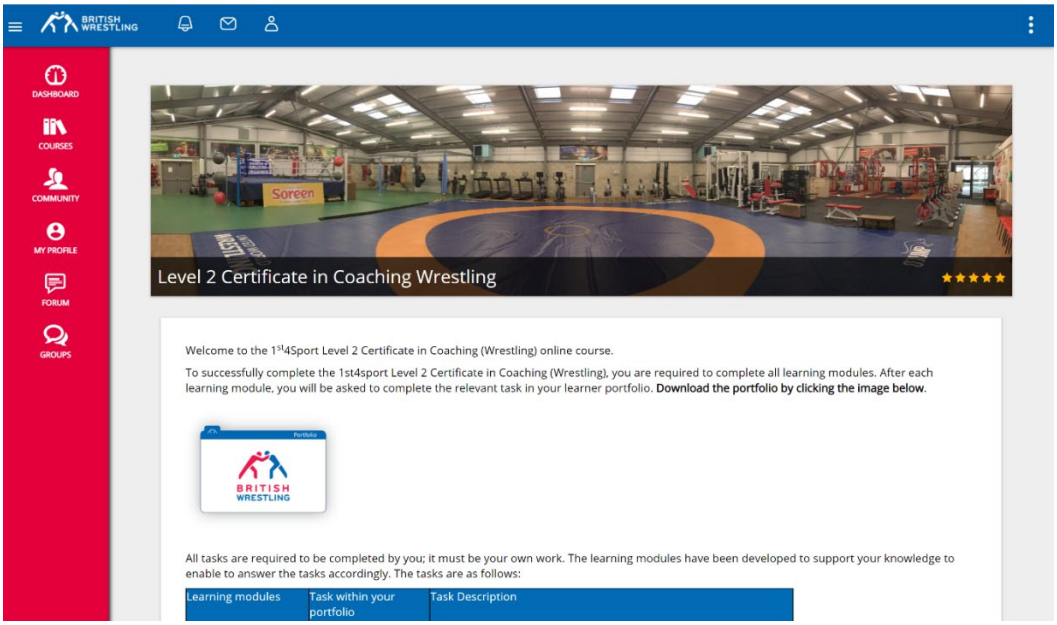
# Workforce

## Referee and Official Development

British Wrestling has been working with Richard Phillip, the British Wrestling Lead Technical Official to develop a simple pathway for new referee's and officials to get involved with the sport. Due to the restrictions of Covid19, we were able to develop the pathway and set it in place for release once the restrictions were eased.

## Coach Development

Coaching courses were reimagined due to the covid19 restrictions with online theory courses launched to enable coaches to access the theory element of our coaching courses. This means that coaching qualifications are now delivered in two parts, an online theory module and an in person practical day. This reduces the time needed to be spent in person and opens up learning to more people across the country. 60 people registered for online theory modules in 2020-21.

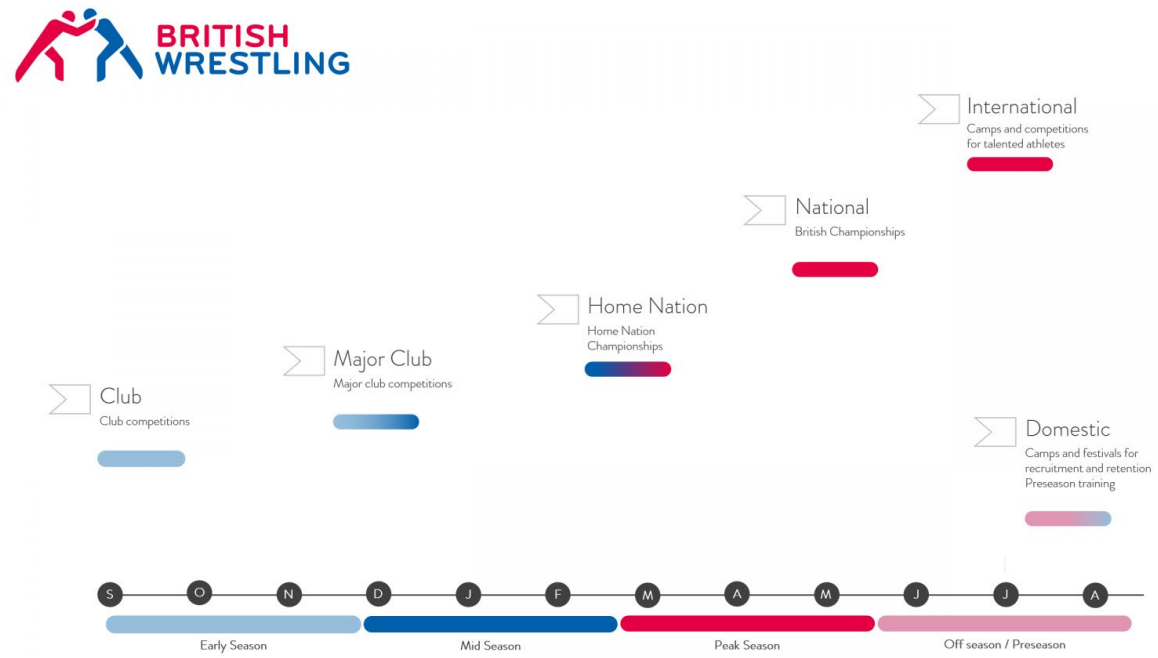


As part of the reimagining, British Wrestling streamlined the qualifications, working closely with 1st4Sport (our educational partner) and the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA). Below is the coach education pathway developed during the 2020-21 period.

British Wrestling also hosted free CPD Courses on 'Strength and Conditioning for Wrestling' through the Development Manager. Three courses were hosted online free of charge to members, seeing 36 coaches booking on to develop their knowledge.

## Competitions

No domestic competitions took place in 2020-21 due to the pandemic. During this time BWA implemented the new competition season. The goal of establishing a competition season is to assist clubs, coaches and spectators in forward planning for events.




## Digital Competition System

## Talent and Performance

### Great Britain Senior Squad (Build for Birmingham)

The pandemic significantly reduced the ability for the Great Britain senior squad to train and training moved online supported by GBR Support Coach Stevie McKeown. It was not until the summer of 2020 that elite athletes were provided an exemption in order to train in person. British Wrestling reacted and adapted providing a covid secure training opportunity based at the British Wrestling Academy for athletes working towards Olympic qualification events and latterly those on Commonwealth Games long lists.

Opportunities for competition were sparse with the pandemic having a significant impact on international travel and competitions. This restricted preparations for Olympic qualification and unfortunately British athletes did not qualify for the delayed Tokyo Olympic Games.

On a positive note, a number of athletes benefitted from the focused training time and demonstrated progression enabling British Wrestling to secure further funding from UK Sport to support our performance ambitions.

### Talent Pathway

Unfortunately, due to the restrictions of the pandemic the talent pathway activities ground to a halt. Talent Lead Jit Rakhra and coaches attempted to signpost athletes on the pathway to online activities however this is a lost year of activity for many promising young athletes.

During the pandemic the talent pathway was evaluated and a new way of operating shared with interested coaches, athletes and parents at a webinar in February 2021.