

Editorial

In canoeing, as in many other sports, there are some people who are in it for the long haul. Even when they are no longer physically capable of following their addiction on the water they will be involved in administration, assisting their offspring along in their wakes or doing something a little less strenuous, such as touring.

The route to the top and beyond

For most, however, it is an addiction which lasts for a few years, to be pushed aside by the discovery of girl/boyfriends, careers or other sports, maybe to return in later life with nostalgia more relevant than dreams of glory. Some disciplines, such as marathon and sprint, now have greater

strength at masters level than at seniors.

Imagine you are a young addict who has made it to the very top (and most of us can only imagine). After considerable sacrifice in terms of money, time and effort by yourself and those around you, especially parents, and giving up the lifestyle of your peers, you are junior world champion. Where do you go from here? You could continue with further sacrifice of time, money and lifestyle to become, after several more years, world champion again, this time under 23. Then you could continue with more of the same to become world champion again. Olympic champion is the bonus for a couple of disciplines but not for most. Is it worth the sacrifices to get to a title little different from the one you already have? Clearly, some think it is not. If you didn't enjoy training you would not go down that road but not all of us would welcome the chance to go out on yet another foul day or night because it is required of us.

Performance manager Heather Williams, in her annual report to the sprint ACM, said 'We currently have a very young and relatively

inexperienced senior team, with many still competing at U23 level.' It is a story we have heard all too often, meaning we cannot retain our top competitors and are losing them before they reach the level of senior world championships.

Marathon and sprint are currently talking of schemes to encourage under 12s. This is fine if they don't take it too seriously but the danger is that the earlier they start, the earlier they will finish and move on to other interests, maybe other sports, something being seen increasingly across all sports.

I would not be unhappy to see age related world championships removed, just a steady climb up to the single world champion's title. It would have greater prestige and would remain as the true target, one not achieved until getting right to the top.

Stuart Fisher

Changed priorities

Seven canoes there unused
And waiting,
Some having hardly ever
Been wet,
All because she fell in love
With a tatty 'sit on' bought
For fifty quid
That she paddles out on
To collect up plastic rubbish,
Lazy angler's monofilament
And disguard fishing net.

She has herself "all the stars"
And she could, if she wished,
Instruct
But now all she does is
Paddle out collecting rubbish
And people's selfishly disguard
Rope or other unsightly
Floating plastic detritus
And accused cast off
Endless harmful plastics
With which we are now
Forever cursed and stuck.

Up around the old mill creek,
All along to the shore
To the green slippery ferry slip,
Picking up plastic bottles
And take away cartons is in
Fact her normal canoeing trip.

Three decades she has been
Canoeing, maybe even more,
But now she only ever heads
Out on an old and tatty 'sit on'
To fight the anti plastics war.

Sea kayaks there in waiting,
Along with stumpy white
Water canoes,
Forsaken because she would
Rather tidy up her part of
The planet and free it of
Of plastic from a tatty second
Hand 'sit on' canoe.

I am so proud of her efforts,
Even if she won't and can't win
The plastic war alone,
Yet all of us need to start
Somewhere so why not start
By paddling around picking
Out the plastic nearest to your
Club, launching spot, or home.

Kevin Pyne



Late news: BT Sport have announced the nominees for their annual Action Woman of the Year Award in association with the *Telegraph*. The awards, now in their fifth year, celebrate the ten most exceptional sporting performances by British female athletes throughout 2017. The shortlist includes Mallory Franklin, who has taken the individual and team world champion titles in slalom C1. Voting closes on Nov 27th. To vote for her visit btsport.com/actionwoman2017.

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Cover: Lani Belcher, Hayleigh Mason and Lizzie Broughton run the portage during the national marathon championships on the Thames at Purley.