

Report on the Cheshire International Boccia Competition 2007

The England Boccia Squad were delighted to host this years' Cheshire International Boccia Competition funded by Cheshire Building Society at Holmes Chapel Leisure Centre over the weekend of March 31st and April 1st 2007. It was particularly pleasing to have entries from a rejuvenated Scotland team, a Welsh team competing at their first ever Boccia international, and a small group of Canadian international players, as well as the GB and England squads.

In each of the Team and BC4 Pairs events (for throwers with a disability of a cerebral / non-cerebral origin respectively), there were four sides competing, with Great Britain coming out as victors in both events. This is a promising indication for a group of players who will be off to Vancouver in five weeks time, to compete in the Boccia World Cup. Teams 'England 2' and 'England 1' came second and third respectively, the game between them being won on a tie-break after a 6-6 score line in the main game. Scotland were fourth, fielding a very young and novice team who nonetheless pressurised their opponents and improved as the weekend went on. In the BC4 Pairs event Wales lost to Great Britain in the final, with England third and a combined Scottish/Welsh side 'Celtic Warriors' in fourth place.

The trophies were presented by Karen McCormick (Chief Executive Officer) and Maria Mathieson (CSR & Sponsorships Manager) from the Society.

It was very good to see no less than 8 sides competing in the BC3 Pairs competition, for players who use a ramp or assistive device to deliver the ball. The Canadian ramp players have great strength in depth, boasting the current Paralympic champion and a world pairs ranking of fifth. They won the competition, and again 'England 2' came out above 'England 1', taking second and third places. Great Britain were fourth; a shock defeat so close to the World Cup, but perhaps testament to the strength in depth that we have developed nationally within this class.

The GB squad for the World Championships includes only two Scots, with all other players from the England Squad –

Team – Kayleigh Black, Ali Lalani, Nigel Murray, Zoe Robinson and David Smith (1st)

BC3 Pair – Liam Beresford, Iain Omes, Cecilia Turk (4th)

BC4 Pair – Carl Cockbain, Peter McGuire (Scot), Stephen McGuire (Scot) (1st)

The England Squad comprised the following players –

Team 1 – Daniel Bentley, Ryan Langdon, Paige Tabone (3rd)

Team 2 – Nicholas Allen, Rachel Benhamou, Sean Francis (2nd)

BC3 Pair 1 – Lee Hamlyn, Craig Johnston, Lee Maddison (3rd)

BC3 Pair 2 – Emma Harris, Rachel Morgan (2nd)

BC3 Pair 3 – Therese Hunt, Jess Hunter (6th)

BC4 Pair – Chloe Hixson, Emma Turner (3rd)

Comments from athletes, staff and sponsors alike suggested that it was an excellent competition, and one that all will look forward to coming to again in the future. Next year the organisers hope to include it as part of the preparation leading up to the Paralympics, which will take place in Beijing in the Autumn.

Sandra King, England Coach and event organiser with Brian Allen