Goalball UK Annual Report

2021-22

September 2021 to end December 2022

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Welcome from the Chair

I am delighted to welcome you to Goalball UK’s annual report as Chair. Having recently extended my term as chair for a further four years, I know of the importance and breadth of Goalball UK’s work and take great pride in it.

Goalball UK’s work, ultimately, aims to be world leading in promoting and providing sporting opportunities for blind and partially sighted people and to make goalball a universally recognised sport in the U.K. Our enhanced team and new strategy are making great headway toward this goal.

Although I have been part of Goalball UK for several years, I am still in awe of the work we do. I am inspired by the members of our community who have learned to overcome barriers in their personal lives through playing goalball. I feel honoured to steer our Board and ensure that as many people as possible can get involved with our sport.

We have achieved so much in the four years up to 2022. The 2021-22 period is no exception.

Our highlights include:

* Developing relationships with Sport England and UK Sport and of course receiving funding from Sport England to give a base for the continued development of goalball in the UK.
* Seeing the GB teams advance and progress in international competition ahead of Paris 2024
* Seeing our staff team grow with the appointment of a new High-Performance Lead, Digital and Communications Lead and Fundraising Lead to complete the Senior Leadership Team
* Developing our events and outreach to provide more people with the opportunity to take part in goalball.

There have been challenges, of course. We need to strengthen the recruitment of coaches into the sport at all levels. Our community faces serious challenges, of which the cost-of-living crisis is by far the greatest. We are thankful to all our funders, partners, supporters, and volunteers in helping us navigate this together.

Despite these challenges, Goalball UK has an exciting period ahead and we should all look forward to continuing the positive work of our organisation.

John Grosvenor

Chair

Goalball UK

### What is goalball?

Goalball is a sport **specifically designed** for the 360,000 registered blind and visually impaired adults and children in the UK, the largest cohort within the disability spectrum, where players shoot and defend their goal by tracking a ball with a bell in it whilst under blindfold. The sport was created after World War II to assist the rehabilitation of injured soldiers and is now a **much-loved Paralympic sport** – one of only 22 ‘Summer Games’ sports to achieve this global status.

Whilst it is a team game that fuses several sporting elements in to one, **it is not an adaptation of another established sport**. That independence means we can be focussed and nimble on behalf of our community, although we also have to work doubly hard to achieve the recognition and resources that a ‘parent’ National or International Governing Body might provide.

It is a very technical, tactile and tactical team sport laced with strategies in deception; **a brilliant balance of silence and celebration** with a certain magic in how the players become so fluent in the space provided by the court. An on-court human chess match where aerobic and power-based abilities are crucial, requiring a series of mini-dynamic movements over the course of a 24-minute match and the need to take **decision-making responsibility** on-court.

People who are blind clearly face a wide range of practical and social challenges, but goalball features the scoring of goals from 18 metres away when there are trained opponents trying to stop that – **the sporting equivalent of threading the eye of a needle without vision**. Could you navigate your workplace with such precision wearing eye shades? Goalball players can!

Goalball is sometimes described as **Sport’s best kept secret**. This is a label that, with your help, we would like to shed; not out of a sense of frustration or lack of appreciation, but because we believe that our community is at a natural stage where it is ready and needs to grow. We combine **elite level Paralympic sport**, featuring a desire to succeed on the global stage, with a **truly inclusive option** for those who are often excluded from physical activity and being in a team at school or recreationally.

Goalball UK is a registered charity based in Sheffield and was formed in 2010. We now have an executive staff of 13, a frugal budget and much of our energy and capacity comes through an extraordinary support network meaning that there are often more coaches, officials and volunteers at a tournament than there are players on-court. And whilst every sport has its ‘critics corner’, our canine version is somewhat special and unique!

We enjoy the enthusiastic financial support of Sport England in relation to growing the grassroots and club base of the sport, and we are delighted that from 2021 our national teams and programmes will be the subject of some transitional support from UK Sport as we aim to address the undoubted but bridgeable gap to international elite level performance and qualification for future Paralympic Games.

Goalball’s social return on investment

No matter who you speak to, they say that **the goalball community feels like a family**. It faces challenges, strives for recognition, and provides a unique stage where VI people can demonstrate their athletic and sensory talents, that then **translate into a growing sense of personal independence and achievement in daily life.**

* **We enable introversion to be replaced by a desire and ability to engage** with their community and beyond - a powerful antidote at the best of times but especially so during Covid-19 which is creating sustained periods of social isolation for people with a disability.
* **Goalball enables our players to live independent lives**. For example, diary management and travelling on public transport to training and international competitions, whether alone or in a group, boosts confidence. Whilst ‘sweeping’ rather than ‘pinpoint’ techniques developed to find the ball also translate to and enhance the ability to locate domestic items at home. The net effect is that many previously protective families relax and embrace this newly acquired freedom.
* **60 per cent of Goalball players are in full-time education**, with research showing that VI people are 47% more likely to enter higher education and progress further in life if they have played goalball. Whilst a significant number of our players mirror the wider VI community, where rates of unemployment can be as high as 75% and over 40% are classified as NEETS, our elite level teams also feature a doctor, teacher, city trader and a recent accountancy graduate of Oxford University, for example. Diversity is at the heart of our community.
* The format of **the sport also enables community cohesion with sighted people able to be part of playing and training.** Siblings, family and friends can provide practical and emotional support simply by wearing eye shades, allowing them to truly appreciate the unique challenges faced by the players.
* We have a decade of anecdotal evidence of the **profound impact** goalball has on the lives of our players and their families, and now we have the systematic research to prove this. According to independent analysis conducted by York St John University in 2020, we deliver a truly impressive **Social Return on Investment of £4.31 for each £1 invested.**

CEO Introduction

Mark Winder

Pride is the word which best describes 2022 for us. As a collective we need to be proud of the improvements we continue to make

Coming out of a volatile period of the Covid-19 Pandemic we now face the challenges of a cost-of-living crisis and despite this we continue to thrive.

We are mindful of rising costs to ourselves, our staff and our members and as we move into 2023 we need to be pragmatic about the decisions we make.

Coming out of lockdown we delivered a season in the backdrop of a pandemic, whilst ensuring the safety of our community. This is something we should all be proud of. Despite the challenges, additional costs and travel interruptions, we did it and what was obvious is the standard of goalball in our country continues to improve universally.

In April of 2022 Sport England awarded us £2.5m to support our governing and systemic role for 5 years and Talent for 3 years. This is an increase of over 40% and will help us to develop the sport albeit in under the shadow of a cost-of-living crisis. We are incredibly pleased and helps us towards certainty for the next five years.

We further developed safeguarding and established our own independent careline to protect the Goalball Family.

We received UK Sport Funding to support our High-Performance Programme and events such as Goalfix Cup. The quality this allowed us to deliver a tournament of incredibly high quality and helped us create a blueprint for future events.

The GB Men competed internationally at the IBSA European B Championships in November 2022, taking fourth place overall. The squad made it to the semi-finals undefeated with a brilliant team effort. We are excited about their progression in to 2023 and beyond.

The GB Women reached the quarter finals after coming through an incredibly tough group. They showed incredible skill and teamwork, which bodes well for the upcoming 2023 IBSA World Games and European A Championships.

## Our people

We were proud of Robert Avery represented us at Tokyo as the only British referee, doing an excellent job.

Dina Murdie continues to represent us as a Senior Course conductor, travelling the world supporting, challenging, and assessing referees.

Both Dina and Robert are true ambassadors for our sport and for Goalball UK.

As we grow and diversify Sport England have invested in two new roles to help us on the journey:

Gary Fraser joined us as High-Performance Lead, the first time since 2012 that we have had someone in this position. We see this role as fundamental in supporting the development of our obsession to continue to develop and grow our U.K. high performance programme, creating world class Great Britain teams.

Jo Hercberg joined us as Digital and Communications Lead in August and is already helping develop our obsession to continue to increase the awareness of goalball and Goalball U.K. across England and the United Kingdom.

Charlotte Rooke joined us in December to help address our obsession to increase funding and resource to support the growth and sustainability of goalball and Goalball U.K.

## Widening opportunities

We are proud of our Goalball Academy: providing equality of opportunity to our younger players who are not afforded the same opportunities to develop as sighted athletes

The Youth Forum is developing brilliantly and to provide voice to the young people within our sport is crucial as we continue our journey.

We all need to be proud of the Competition changes implemented by the Club and Competition Committee. This adds a real integrity to our sport.

We have launched a ‘This Girl Can Programme’ to provide more opportunities to women and girls to enjoy the sport, as well as to provide a strong female voice into the game.

We will continue to improve our club development and support offer into 2023 to allow new clubs to be developed and current clubs to grow.

We are committed to support for clubs to deliver inter and intra club competitions.

We do need clubs to work with us on this as we already deliver 33 days of Competition, (all at weekends), as well as Talent, High Performance, Referee Courses, Academy and Summer Camps.

We know we are not perfect, but in the recent survey the feedback overall was positive. There are things to address but our recent survey revealed:

* 97% Satisfied or better with Goalball UK services
* 97% Satisfied or better with their level of play

There’s lots to be proud of in 2021-22 and so much to look forward to in 2022-23 with the IBSA World Games 2023 just around the corner.

Competition

Goalball UK’s competition structure continues to evolve and provide an impressive 33 days of competition for players and clubs across the calendar year.

26 active clubs compete and take part in three levels of play. These are divided into Regional, Intermediate and Super Leagues with three national cup competitions.

Grassroots competition is at the heart of Goalball UK, friendships are formed, medals are won, and challenges overcome.

Goalball UK not only provides the structure but delivers the competition days including planning, promoting, organising and delivery on the day.

It doesn’t stop with the final whistle though; all levels of play are celebrated on social media by Goalball UK!

An impressive 231 people took part in the 2021/22 goalball season with more expected to join in the 2022/23 season.

## The Goalball UK Events Strategy

The Events Strategy was created to focus on domestic, international club and national team events.

In 2022 the appointment of a ‘This Girl Can’ Working Group was announced to focus on creating more opportunities for women and girls within the sport.

18 people have undertaken Safeguarding training. 9 people have also completed the Welfare specific training and The Club Event Grant funding programme was launched.

## Goalfix Cup 2022

Goalfix Cup 2022 was the first ever Goalball UK domestic tournament to be live streamed with audio descriptive commentary. The live stream received an impressive 2300+ views across the weekend.

The event, and in particular the audio descriptive commentary was incredibly well received by the audience.

*“Audio description was a game changer. Fantastic commentary.”*

*“As I was able to watch the games without my teammates having to tell me what was going on. This therefore ensured the venue was quiet during play.”*

*It makes the event more exciting it is a feature of an event which I think warrants investment to expand for future events across the league”*

*“It was great to be able to continue to follow the action even when going for lunch or having downtime with the team”*

*“It feels very appropriate that the event should be accessible to all, including spectators. I was delighted that this facility was made available”*

## The Future for Competition

We are working hard to plan and deliver 2023/24 competition season whilst building lasting impact and legacy work linked to the IBSA World Games 2023 which will be held in Birmingham in August.

Our This Girl Can project group is now in place, with the first all-female open event organised for February 2023. The group will be working on improving and providing more opportunities for women and girls in 2023 and beyond.

As we go through the season, we look forward to delivering our 2022-31 Events Strategy with enthusiasm.

Membership

Goalball UK offers a free full membership package to anyone who wants to join.

We are almost unique amongst other National Governing Bodies to offer this for free.

Keeping our membership accessible is important to us. It means anyone can join regardless of their personal circumstances.

Benefits for players include free personal liability insurance. For members who don't play, benefits include the Goalball Plus Benefits Scheme plus early access to tickets, competitions, courses, and products.

Currently we have 445 members with steady organic growth underway.

Our membership reflects the diverse community in goalball:

* 70% of our membership actively play goalball
* 63% (279) members are male, 36% (159) are female with 1% (6) undeclared and 1 identifying as other.
* 80% (354) are white, 17% (74) are from ethnically diverse communities and 4% (17) are undeclared.
* 7% (33) of our members identify as LGBTQIA+, 71% (317) are heterosexual and 21% (95) chose not to declare their sexuality to us.

Over the coming months and years, we want to broaden our membership to audiences beyond our sport and open up to charitable supporters as well.

Development

Goalball UK’s Development work is key to growing awareness of goalball across the UK. Our outreach covers all of the home nations from the Shetland Islands to Bognor Regis.

Leadership courses boost the number of people able to coach and lead goalball in their schools and clubs. This is vital to increasing participation in our sport and ensuring the sport is played accurately.

## Leadership courses

Goalball UK have delivered Leadership courses to 193 people across schools and clubs in the 2021-22 timeline.

Goalball UK deliver two in person Leadership courses:

* a School Leaders course (4 hours) primarily for community sports coaches, PE staff, sports students and/or young leaders.
* a Club Leaders course (6 hours) primarily for coaches who are going to be working with blind and partially sighted players in a competitive club environment.

These courses generate income for Goalball UK which is re-invested back into the development of the sport at grassroots level.

Between September 2021 and December 2022 Goalball UK delivered:

* 3 Open School Leaders courses (to a total of 23 people)
* 14 Closed School Leaders courses (to a total of 165 people)
* 1 Closed Club Leaders course (to a total of 5 people)

Goalball UK work with several partners to develop our Leadership courses. Partners include UK Coaching and British Blind Sport.

Working in partnership, we create online modules and supporting resources. This increases our reach by enabling people to learn more about the sport in their own time, space, and pace.

In future, we aim to offer CPD workshops to coaches and mentoring opportunities.

## Partnership events

Goalball UK regularly participate in external partnership events to raise awareness of goalball and the specific work of Goalball UK.

One of Goalball UK’s main partners is British Blind Sport (BBS) and, between September 2021 and December 2022, we delivered goalball taster sessions at 12 of their ‘Have A Go Days’.

The events provide good opportunities to engage with other local sports clubs/coaches and VI professionals plus recruit volunteers and find new venues.

Sight Village is another partnership event that Goalball UK regularly attends. These events provide good opportunities to meet blind and partially sighted people as well network with other professionals working in the ‘VI world’.

Conferences, be it live or virtual, provide a similar networking opportunity. Goalball UK have recently been involved in conferences hosted by Sporting Heritage, Para Coach, VIEW, Summit, Sight Loss Council, Retina UK and the Albinism Fellowship.

Combined with the power of social media, the increased number of virtual events means that it is financially viable for Goalball UK to reach an even wider audience. This is beneficial for the sport on all levels.

Sight loss organisation events all help increase participation; FE and HE events can attract new volunteers; and corporate events can help increase revenue.

Schools and Young People

The Goalball UK Children and Young People projects are led by Stephen Newey, Children and Schools Officer, under the line management of Alex Bunney as Participation Lead.

Across our school programmes over two thousand children and young people have been introduced to goalball in the UK.

Of the 2200 children, 140 are registered blind or sight impaired with 1500 being classified as ‘disadvantaged’ (SEND, VI, receives Pupil Premium etc).

As well as delivering goalball sessions to 50 different schools, we have also delivered 5 Junior Days and 1 Summer Camp boosting the level of children and young people’s goalball exposure in the UK.

For 2022/23 we are working on the development and launch of the Goalball UK Secondary School Teaching Resources to reach more people.

To ensure we make the most of major event opportunities, we are also linking and developing Children and Young People work in line with the Goalfix Cup 2023 and the IBSA World Games 2023.

High Performance

Goalball UK appointed Gary Fraser to the new full-time role of High-Performance Lead in June 2022. Gary works with staff, athletes, and support staff to develop the programme across all levels of play in what is an exciting period for the sport at performance level.

Gary joins us with an extensive background in disability sport having spent his career championing inclusion for people of all abilities, including nine years at Scottish Disability Sport as Regional Development Manager and Performance Manager. He managed the Scottish boccia performance programme, developing high performance players to transition to the Boccia UK World Class Programme. He also led the Scotland Para Lawn Bowls team to the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

Gary is excited about contributing to the aims and obsessions of Goalball UK, in particular the forthcoming IBSA World Games in 2023, which are being held in Birmingham.

The creation of the role represents a huge commitment by the Board, as Goalball UK strive to further develop their high-performance men’s and women’s programmes.

## High Performance at Goalball UK 2022

It has been a busy year for high performance goalball as GB Men prepared for the IBSA European B Championships taking place from 12 – 20 November in Matoshinos, Portugal. This was an important event for the men’s programme as we strive to get promoted to the ‘A’ division. A promotion would mean we are competing with the best teams in Europe, providing an opportunity to qualify from the region to the Paralympic Games.

GB Women had the excitement of the IBSA World Championships taking place in December in Matoshinos, Portugal. This is the first time a GB team has competed in the World Championships since 2010 and highlights the progress our women’s team has made over the past few years.

Competing against the best teams in the world provides an opportunity to test our players and the event offers a direct qualification route to the Paralympic Games. A hugely significant achievement, and we congratulate the players, coaches, and support staff.

## Plans looking forward

Goalball UK is reviewing the high-performance programme as we aim to improve what is being delivered to support player progression. Utilising our resources, we want to provide a programme that is aligned to our strategic ambitions in the short, medium, and long term. We are entering into a period of transition which is exciting for the sport.

2023 promises to be big a year for high performance goalball from both a delivery perspective, but also with the major events that will take place. August 2023 sees the IBSA World Games coming to Birmingham in which both our men’s and women’s teams will compete. This is a multi-sport event which will showcase the very best of visual impairment sport, as well as high performance goalball. In addition, 2023 will see the GB Women involved in the European A Championships, and there is hope the GB Men will also compete, however, we are awaiting official confirmation from IBSA regarding their promotion from division B.

December 2022 – November 2023 represents our Paris 2024 Paralympic Qualification period, and we are working hard to achieve this goal. However, we are also looking longer term as we strive to improve and be best prepared for the Los Angeles 2028 Cycle.

Talent and Academy

Talent sits as an integral part of the Goalball UK High Performance Programme.

Players and staff within this programme are developing themselves through learning and experiences to best prepare them for transition into the senior Great Britain squads.

A total of 27 players currently sit within the Great Britain Talent Squad and the Goalball Academy.

## Current status

In June 2022 both male and female Great Britain U19 squads attended the European Para Youth Games in Pajulahti Finland.

9 athletes competed against high level international opposition finishing 3rd in each of their representative competitions. A phenomenal achievement by both squads.

The Talent Squad now embarks on an annual programme of training camps and tournaments, supported by coaching and multi-disciplinary staff.

The Goalball Academy has delivered 5 training camps, an outdoor adventure camp and over 10 online workshops. 24 young people have participated in the project with a number graduating onto the Talent Squad.

## Plans looking forward

Both the Talent Squad and Academy will continue to provide age and development specific opportunities for players to reach their potential in goalball. It is vital to develop our talent identification routes and this will be aided by a new partnership with York St. John University that will research into player profiling and inform our talent ID processes moving forward.

Alongside this a new partnership with TAP (Talented Athlete Project) is moving forward with TAP attending Talent Squad training and delivering online athlete development workshops. This new holistic approach will explore putting athlete’s wellbeing at the heart of athlete development.

Challenges

* The cost-of-living crisis which is impacting Goalball UK, Clubs, Players, and partners with rising costs.
* Finding suitable accessible venues for our competitions, particularly those with two separate sports halls.
* Number of officials available
* Number of coaches and education / training offer for new and current coaches
* Locating and working with schools with visually impaired pupils
* Locating and working with VI children and young people

Annual Accounts

Can be downloaded on the Goalball UK website

PDF Annual Accounts

Word Document Annual Accounts

Thank you

Goalball UK would like to thank our funders, supporters and partners including:

* Boost Charitable Trust
* British Blind Sport
* British Blind Sport
* British Paralympic Association
* CIMPSA
* Club Matters
* Goalfix Sports
* Hummel Sports
* Local Authority Sensory Support Units
* Our Clubs (as a collective)
* Our Sub Committees
* Our volunteers who give so much time and energy to goalball
* Peter Harrison Foundation who awarded us funding to supplement our Men’s and Women’s programme.
* Sport and Recreation Alliance
* Sport England who has supported the progression of our talent squad.
* Sports Aid who are supporting 14 athletes via their athlete Sport Aid Awards and Backing the Best Awards.
* Sports Aid via their Backing the Best project has funded our #FindTheNext Academy for 3 years.
* TAP (Talented Athlete Project) supporting to deliver a new collaborative and holistic wellbeing programme.
* TASS (Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme) who are supporting 17 athletes with essential support services and access to expert practitioners to aid their sporting development.
* The Goalball UK Board
* The National Lottery
* The staff at Goalball UK
* The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers
* UK Coaching
* UK Sport, who awarded us considerable support through the National Squad Support Fund
* VICTA
* Youth Sport Trust