

UK Sport funding confirmed for artistic swimming and water polo

Water polo will benefit from UK Sport investment over the next four years as a result of securing support from the new National Squads Support Fund.

The fund is available to sports which do not receive World Class Programme or Progression funding.

Alongside six other sports, two aquatics disciplines will receive £216,250 (artistic swimming) and £375,000 (water polo) respectively over four years, supporting their top level athletes and programmes. This crucial contribution will enable athletes to attend major international championships and access other events that form the critical path to the Olympic Games.

Sally Munday, CEO at UK Sport, said: "The National Squads Support Fund is a key part of our new investment approach and demonstrates our commitment to a wider group of sports and athletes in our Olympic and Paralympic high-performance community. We are investing in a longer-term, holistic view of success, powering a broader range of sports, champions and medallists, built on the highest standards of integrity and partnership.

"Thanks to the ongoing support of the Government and The National Lottery, it is really pleasing to be confirming these eight summer Olympic and Paralympic sports set to benefit from the National Squads Support Fund. This is an important contribution for the athletes and sports involved, and we are looking forward to working with these eight sports and watching their progress as a result." This funding is a huge result and undoubtedly a timely boost for water polo which recently revealed a new look schedule for the next two years, focusing on development at an international level.

Hoping to secure a Tokyo 2020 place at the Olympic qualifier in the Japanese capital in May, the British Artistic Swimming duet, Isabelle Thorpe and Kate Shortman, have spearheaded a positive trajectory for the sport in Great Britain over the last few years, achieving a pair of 14th place finishes at the 2019 World Aquatics Championships in South Korea.

British Swimming chief executive, Jack Buckner, said: "I'm delighted that we can welcome UK Sport support for two further Olympic disciplines, both of which have great potential for the future, and have already built significant positive momentum. I'm also extremely pleased for my artistic swimming and water polo colleagues and athletes who have worked so hard to be in a position to successfully secure this well-deserved backing."

Fergus Feeney, CEO of Swim Wales and Chair of the British Water Polo Leadership Group, added: "I am delighted for everyone involved in our sport today – our athletes, the leadership team and the community at large. This new fund to support National Squads and progression sports is a very welcomed addition to the UK Sport investment portfolio.

"Our investment award will help us support the unbelievable talent that we have in British squads, as we take our new water polo strategy forward. We are grateful to UK Sport for hearing our case for water polo investment and making this decision."

Swim England chief executive, Jane Nickerson, added: "Artistic swimming is already a recipient of UK Sport Aspiration Funding to support the duet in their bid to qualify for the Tokyo Olympic Games and we welcome this additional funding, which will help to support the current team programme. Artistic swimming is a relatively small sport and considerable work went in to securing this bid, so thanks are due to all those who worked tirelessly to achieve this funding."

Overall, six Olympic and two Paralympic sports will benefit from the National Squads Support Fund, which will see £2.4m invested across the eight sports.

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