



Coach Education changes and the benefits of the new system

British Weight Lifting, the sport's national governing body, has recently announced changes to the recognition of coaching qualifications within the sport in a move to improve coaching standards as well as attract greater funds from the Government to invest into our sport. The changes, which will be introduced over the next 18 months, come as part of British Weight Lifting's wider strategy to grow and develop weight lifting and to stay up to date with the best national standards and safeguarding practices which have to be at the forefront of the sport's development.

The Government is only prepared to invest in those sports and NGBs that have the highest standards of governance, administration and management and into development programmes like coaching, if they meet the agreed national standards and best practice.

Sadly the previous BWL coaching certificates and awards implemented for many years do not meet today's national standards and do not offer a recognised qualification outside of the sport and therefore our sport has not had similar levels of investment into coaching that most other NGB's have experienced.

To increase the levels of funding into our sport, BWL has spent the last two years working with the UK's national sports agencies to move Weight Lifting towards a more professional sport with fully recognised and accredited coaching qualifications that are crucially aligned to both the UK and European Coaching frameworks, as is the case with most other NGB's.

The new qualifications are recognised by the various national sports agencies as offering a consistent and appropriate pathway through the coaching system, ensuring all coaches are qualified at appropriate levels.

Both the new Government (DCMS) and Sport England coaching strategies put great emphasis on the need for coaches to help drive participation in sport; that coaches should meet the national standards required of today; and should be regularly updating themselves on what is best practice. There is a recognition that the vast majority of coaches are volunteers but also that society has changed and those operating in these coaching roles should hold qualifications which fit the needs of today.

BWL believes that if it does not significantly update the BWL coaching scheme now, prior to new funding submissions later in 2016, the sport of Weight Lifting will continue to miss out on the considerable Government funding that goes into developing coaches and the ability to increase the numbers of people participating in the sport.

Sadly this means that all the previous BAWLA, BWLA, BWL certificates and awards that are not 1st4sport accredited will no longer be recognised as current qualifications after June 2017, as they are not aligned with the Government's Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and/or Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). All the new BWL qualifications are on these frameworks.

The old certificates and awards because of the way they were written and delivered could not be included under the QCF and RQF at the relevant levels. However, BWL in line with other NGB's has reached an agreement with the national sport agencies to "bridge over" all our coaches who hold the old certificates and awards enabling them to receive the new recognised qualifications by attending a one day bridging course. In effect turning their old certificate and award into the new recognised qualification.

BWL will not be removing any existing BAWLA/BWLA/BWL certificates and awards in Weight Lifting that current coaches may hold, which means current Senior or Staff Coaches will remain with the same titles, but will be provided with a simple and extremely cost effective way of upgrading the old certificates and awards to a newly accredited qualification.

Basically if we do not follow the guidance of both the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as well as Sport England, BWL will not be able to maximise future funding opportunities.

The main beneficiaries of this approach moving forwards will be our clubs, universities and schools as there will potentially be greater opportunities to apply for increased funding when it comes to coaching matters.

If we do align to both the UK and European Coaching Frameworks, it brings requirements for coaches in line with the expectations and allows BWL to show to the UK government and others we have a widely recognised, professional and fit for purpose coaching scheme worth investing in.

To make matters easier for existing coaches, BWL will be offering a series of "bridging days" that will not only provide individuals with invaluable personal coach development but also allow more traditional coaches the opportunity to look at new coaching tools and methods and how things may have changed. On successful completion of the day, the individual will be accredited with the new qualification.

So why does a coach have to register their certificate or award before the 30th June 2016? It is with regret that BWL has not in the past kept accurate records of who holds a coaching award and certificate. BWL also wishes to compile an up-to-date, accurate list of coaches ensuring improved communications, future help and support for all on the database.

Furthermore new funding strategies will be submitted to Sport England later in 2016 and we need to have demonstrated well in advance that our learning programmes are fully in line with stakeholder expectations.

We hope that all coaches will see this in a positive manner and approach the process with an open mind that will allow the sport to grow and develop in years to come.