

CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE 2023 AGM

A warm welcome to the AGM

General. I am delighted to announce that the 2022/23 season, our 75th Anniversary, was a major success. Not only across all 8 Disciplines, but at the ISSSC as well, where we experienced increased success on recent years. You may also wish to mention that to get to this point we have had to navigate our way through a number of attempts by Army HQ to take Winter Sport funds as a savings measure against wider defence cuts. I would therefore suggest using an abridged version of these notes for your speech at the Cocktail Party, which I have listed below.

2022/23 Season. In our first full year back on snow and ice following two disrupted years during the COVID pandemic, I am pleased to announce that across all eight disciplines, Army teams were back to their best, albeit in some cases they were a little rusty. All army level championships were once again at full capacity with c 3000 men and women, novice through to the elite, back to competing at the highest level and the fact that the Army produced such good results at the various Inter Service events was remarkable; taking 8 of the 13 event competitions to sit firmly atop of the moral high ground. In mentioning the Inter Service results, I have to acknowledge that of the 8 events that we won, 2 were achieved by the women's teams. The closeness of the competition at the Ice Championships always amazes me and so I also hope the split seconds work in our favour this year as we try to release the strangle hold the RAF have on the Skeleton and Luge events. My thanks are extended to all of our competitors and of course the many coaches and officials who pull everything together across all disciplines.

There were, however, some outstanding performances. The Army Men's Alpine, both Nordic teams and Snowboard teams, Telemark and Cresta teams were all victorious. We also had several individual champions in Alpine, Lt Josh Serdat and Maj Tessa Pirie. Nordic 15K XC - WO2 Ben Woolley and the 10K Biathlon - Pte Alfie Sprake. In Telemark Capt Stefan Hurst. In the Bobsleigh we had LCpl Nick Gleeson & Rfn Tom Harris and in the Luge - SSgt Dani Scott.

2023/24 Season. Over the course of the year, we have faced increasing in-year financial pressures with all areas of the Army's budget under constant scrutiny. Army Winter Sports have fought a number of close battles over the past 6-months to not only save funding, but I would suggest the survival and existence of winter activity as an Army activity. The fact that we have a very high-profile President, an active and engaged Vice Chair and team of hard working individuals behind the scenes owes a lot to the fact we are here celebrating our seasons launch.

Over recent years we have corralled the wider AWSA enterprise and can report that there will be 38 exercises deployed across Europe this season with numbers in attendance as high as they have ever been. Testiment to this the Qualifying Championships were oversubscribed by 250 applications against a capacity of 500.

As things stand, I believe we can only focus a year at a time and whilst we have strengthened our long-term position as a leading sport in the Army's portfolio and remain a valuable training activity for the Army chain of comd, we are always in the gaze of financial scrutiny.

Elite Athletes. I think we are all aware of the outstanding performances of our athletes over the past couple of seasons. We currently have 1 athlete on the various Elite Athlete programmes, and 4 receiving Army Sport Scholarships. Capt Marcus Webb continues to work with the BBU in Nordic and Biathlon with three further Nordic athletes in the pipeline.

Sponsors. There is little doubt that Army Winter Sports could not survive without the generosity of our sponsors. I would once again like to formally thank our Direct Sponsors for their continued support, and those sponsors who sit within the Indirect construct through Army Sport and MSE for your substantial support to the Association, specifically those who have increased their support for the coming year; this will prove hugely beneficial against the increasing costs we are all experiencing both at home and in Europe.

I must also welcome our old friends from Team Army and those potential sponsors who sit in the wings as work is undertaken to develop a closer working relationship between Army Sport, MSE and Team Forces that will see benefits for us all. And finally, to our 'Friends of the AWSA'; Your collective support is hugely appreciated.

Summary. All that remains is to keep our fingers crossed that climate change and the weather do not combine to make the Alpes more suitable to mountain biking than skiing this winter. I look forward to seeing you all at some point on snow this season. The Association is in excellent order.