

Positive outlook for Rio 2016

Many young eyes at this year's World Rowing Junior and Under 23 Championships were looking past London 2012 towards their ultimate goal: the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. For most of these young athletes, the Games in London may be too much, too soon, but the next five years provides them with more time to let their true potential shine through.

In Brazil, the prospect of a home-water Olympic Games is mouth-watering. Two men have the enviable task of preparing Brazilian youngsters for what might be the sporting highlight of their lives. Sergio Brasil Sztanicsa has been coaching the national squad for 11 years, joined by Rodrigo Rodrigues, who coxed the Brazilian four to ninth place at the 2001 World Rowing Championships. It is clear these two coaches have a development plan set in stone for success in Rio.

World Rowing spoke to Sztanicsa and Rodrigues during the 2011 World Rowing Junior Championships, which was the test event for the 2012 Olympic Rowing Regatta and was held at the 2012 Olympic venue, Dorney Lake.

"Our plan is of course to train the juniors competing here to be our elite rowers at the 2016 Olympics

in Rio. We need young blood to make it happen. That is why we started from scratch with a new team. We are working on a new vision and want to improve both our rowing skills and mentality to be ready for the Olympics in five years' time. The 2016 Games might look far away, but, in view of the many things we still have to do, it is so close!"

The Brazilian junior team competing at Eton was relatively young and, despite not making it into the medals, the plans have been set in motion for future success.

"Most of them will still be juniors next year and one still has two more years to go at junior level. In view of the forthcoming Olympics in Rio, we are also very happy to be here at Dorney Lake.

Everything already seems ready for next year, and that is inspiring."

The new development programme has received much support from the National Federation. Wilson Reeberg, a former rower at international level and now president of the Brazilian Federation, has set up a strategy to improve rowing and coaching skills and it is through this programme that Rodrigues came to work with the Brazilian rowing team. The coaching programme is not limited to Brazilian territory, and numerous >

Brazil's Marciel Souza and Victor Bastos on the pontoon at the 2011 World Rowing Junior Championships in Eton, Great Britain.



Beatriz Cardoso and Gabriela Salles of Brazil competed in the double sculls at the 2011 World Rowing Junior Championships in Eton, Great Britain.

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> links have been established with rowing federations worldwide.

“Our coaches are currently working with the German team. Our junior athletes spent more than a month in Germany to train. With the World Rowing Junior Championships included, we have spent over 40 days in Europe. For our rowers it also means they need to follow long-distance learning programmes to continue their studies.”

Yet Brazil want to continue broadening their horizons and learn even more: “Although the

experience in Germany this year is positive, we want to go to other countries in coming years. It’s important to gain experience in different types of training and gather as much information as we can. As coaches, we need more experience, and the youngsters also need to communicate a lot with other teams – it’s all part of our learning curve.”

When not touring Europe during the summer regatta season, the hard work continues behind the scenes: “For the national team, we have one national centre in Rio de Janeiro at the moment,

where our athletes train together about three times a year for a month. In between these periods, the national coaches go to different clubs.”

“In addition to our group of international rowers and our more or less 600 competitive rowers in Brazil, we are running an identification programme. Our coaches travel to the 55 clubs in our country to test the athletes – the best ones are selected to train with the national team. We will pursue this identification programme in coming years.”

Other planned developments include building more national training centres and continuing to host open international regattas in Brazil: “It is important to secure a better level of competition for our athletes so that they can learn more, see how they compare internationally, and exchange with other athletes. But you know, Brazil is far from everything and that is a challenge.”

The Brazilian federation also believe they can improve if they produce their own boats, although at present they are still importing them. “We have found a sponsor that will help us produce 200 boats to begin with. As in other countries, sponsors don’t come easily but with lots of work we’ve managed to secure some.”

All these efforts have two ultimate goals: to be ready for success in Rio de Janeiro and attract young rowers within the next five years to be the national heroes of the future.

● Pat Lambert / Laura Fell