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Caitlin Boothroyd – Chasing the Wind



2018 was a great year for Heswall's Caitlin Boothroyd who won a string of national windsurfing events to become the UK's top junior (U15) girl. Besides travelling all around the UK for training and competitions, 14-year-old Caitlin also ventured overseas to Ostende in Belgium for the North Sea Cup, Liepaja in Latvia for the World Championships, and then Athens in Greece for the European Championships.

Caitlin said: "It's been an amazing year for me – I've gained lots of experience, travelled abroad for competitions, and accomplished much more than I ever expected to!"

Caitlin's home club is the West Kirby Warriors, who train at the Marine Lake on Friday evenings throughout the summer. The Warriors are a 'Team 15' club. There are dozens of T15 clubs around the UK, all supported by the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) to encourage kids into competitive windsurfing, and to make sure they're having fun on the water.

West Kirby is a fantastic venue for windsurfers of all levels. As an enclosed lake it allows beginners to learn the basics and progress quickly without having to worry about waves or currents or getting swept away, with the benefit of steady coastal breezes and never getting out of your depth. Advanced windsurfers travel from far and wide to make the most of the lake's unique combination of strong winds and flat water, a perfect set-up for speed sailing and freestyle.

For Caitlin, West Kirby is perfect for her needs. "I love sailing at West Kirby – it's perfect for my training, with great conditions and is so convenient and accessible," she explained.

With the West Kirby Warriors, Caitlin quickly got into competitive windsurfing. Training with other kids helped develop her skills, and the West Kirby team's successes as the most frequent winner of the national T15 Champions Cup gave her a taste for winning. In 2016 Caitlin made it into the RYA's Zone Squad and, since the end of 2017,

the National Junior Squad. These training squads are part of the RYA's 'Pathway to Podium' and have provided access to intensive top-flight coaching, developing racing skills, knowledge and tactics and supporting national and international competitions.

"I've learnt loads from being in the National Junior Squad," said Caitlin. "Most of the training is based at the Weymouth & Portland National Sailing Academy, a great venue and the heart of British sailing. I've been working with top coaches, making lots of new friends, and travelling to amazing places to compete."

Over the next couple of years Caitlin aims to keep training hard with the National Junior Squad, gaining more experience racing against the world's best young windsurfers, and transitioning into RS:X, which is the Olympic windsurfing class. Due to the physical demands of the sport, she is also working hard on her fitness with the help of Birkenhead's WESPA (World Elite Sports Performance Academy).

Thinking ahead, Caitlin has good plans in place. "In the next year, I am hoping to go to Spain and Israel for the U17 World and European championships," she said. "From now on I will have to compete in the under 17 category, which means moving up a sail size, requiring lots more strength and fitness. I am now going to WESPA in Birkenhead, where I do a strength and conditioning programme focused on the needs of my sport. This has definitely improved my windsurfing and is great winter training when I get a bit less time on the water."

If anyone is interested in learning to windsurf, you can contact Wirral Sailing Centre on 0151 929 7707. Any kids (15 or under) who have mastered the basics and are interested in taking it further, can ask the sailing centre about joining the West Kirby Warriors.

Caitlin has received some support from Boardwise Windsurfing of Cannock, Vivida Lifestyle, and O'Shea Surf, but is always looking for local sponsors to help her continue chasing her dreams and chasing the wind!

