

This April signifies the beginning of the sixth year of my flat water kayaking experience, and it has been just that: an experience.

My journey started because of my sister, Hannah, who did a 'learn to paddle' course at Norwich Canoe Club in the summer of 2010. The next year as an 11-year-old, I found myself sitting in a plastic kayak, not quite sure of what I was doing – but quietly confident thanks to multiple summer holidays in France where I had taken part in family canoeing excursions. I

Our latest Young Norfolk Sports Academy update comes from 17-year-old Norwich School student **Sam Drane**

was surprised to how much I enjoyed kayaking, as I wasn't massively sporty, only playing football once a week for my local team. Little did I know where this

would lead me.

This season has truly been a whirlwind. The first regatta of the year (based at Holme Pierrepont Lake in Nottingham) really set the ball rolling, with a new personal best in the 1000m K1 (single kayak) discipline, something I was far from expecting. Then, each regatta, a new personal best.

By that July at the Junior National Championships regatta, I claimed six medals in a mixture

of K1, K2 (two-man kayak with Luke Shaw), and K4 (four-man kayak). This meant selection for Olympic Hopes International Regatta in Szeged, Hungary – my first international. Although it was disappointing I didn't achieve what I had set out to achieve, I had an amazing experience, and I knew what was necessary to come back faster.

Setting reasonable goals for the next season to focus my training is something the Young Norfolk Sports Academy (YNSA) has helped me with since September 2016. They have supported me throughout the winter, my

favourite time of year by far, where it is important to maintain speed despite limited time on the water.

The mornings and evenings are dark and cold, so motivation is hard, especially when the sessions are long when I do get in a boat. My time is full of indoor strength and conditioning, which wouldn't be possible without YNSA's help with gym membership at the UEA. They have also guided me with nutrition, the importance of social media, and introduced me to a wealth of fantastic other like-minded athletes.



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