

## **Richmond gymnasts delighted to represent their country at the Acrobatic Gymnastics World Championships**

After months of perseverance through lockdown training and competition uncertainty, the hard work of gymnasts from Richmond Gymnastics is now paying off - as they are set to compete for Great Britain on the world stage.

The Acrobatic Gymnastics World Age Group competition and World Championships will take place from 23<sup>rd</sup> June - 4<sup>th</sup> July in Geneva. From Richmond and representing Great Britain are Harry Slater, Lea Wetzel, Toby Cooper-Driver & Anisa Arumugam competing as mixed pairs, with Sophie-Lola Kimberley & Alyssa Figgins as a women's pair, and Tegan Wilcock, Kyla Cook & Lola Ernstzen in the women's group event. In a sport that requires perfect coordination and intuition with your fellow gymnasts, the partners are glad to be competing together.

Their achievement has delighted all at their club - though it is not limited to high achievement in competitions. Richmond Gymnastics is a registered charity and an exceptional community club. In 2020, the club's Director of Coaching received a British Gymnastics Award of Merit for her services to the sport, and their Head of Inclusive Gymnastics was nominated for her work with physical and special educational needs gymnasts.

Following such positive news, coaches and gymnasts alike are looking forward to watching their peers compete internationally for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic took hold. With their club behind them, all the gymnasts are equally delighted to be selected. Kyla Cook said:

"It felt very good and really exciting. I'm quite proud! I was originally at Harefield for 12 years but there was no partnership available for me there, so I moved to Richmond just before Covid. I was bit nervous when I first started but I've settled in now. Richmond has been so important and has allowed me to get where I wanted to go in gymnastics. I love competing because of the adrenalin you get and being able to do things that other people can't. With my disabilities, it's really helped increase my social skills."

As well as incredible skill, the young gymnasts have needed resilience to handle what has been an uncertain time, following multiple lockdowns. Ahead of the championships in June, they are all extremely relieved to be back doing what they love and competing again. Of the fantastic support from their club, and maintain that social aspect, Anisa Arumugam said:

"Richmond is very important because everyone has grown together from when they were younger to get all these opportunities at the gym. The club is very supportive with everything you do. I like how you're able to learn a lot of new things every day. And you get a lot of opportunities so you can grow in your gymnastics. Everyone is friends here! You grow as a person and meet different people at the gym."

Following Richmond's achievement, the gymnasts know just how many benefits the sport brings for young people, with not just technical proficiency and physical development, but also mental wellbeing, improved self-esteem, and leadership skills. Lola Ernstzen said:

"I enjoy pushing through the hard sessions, going to competitions and meeting people from different places. Gymnastics really helps with a lot of things like teambuilding, and it teaches you to be organised! To be selected felt great, because it shows our hard work had paid off.

Richmond's Head of Acrobatics said: "Considering the challenges of this last year, we're really pleased to have four partnerships selected to represent Great Britain. The clubs is so proud of all our gymnasts and we're looking forward to the buzz of international competition again."

James Thomas, British Gymnastics Performance Director, said: "This is another fantastic event to look forward to in the gymnastics calendar. It's an exciting British team and one that will no doubt be glad to get back to competition. Having the opportunity to test themselves against the very best acrobatic gymnasts in the world is a great challenge. Congratulations to all of the gymnasts and coaches on their selection."

Keep up to date with the gymnast's progress via their social media channels @gymnasticsrga, or to find out how to get involved in gymnastics, visit [www.richmondgymnastics.co.uk](http://www.richmondgymnastics.co.uk)

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