

From Pease Bay to Rio ...

Gorebridge teenager Finn Clark is riding the crest of a wave into the sporting trip of a lifetime.

Finn, 16, has been chosen as part of a nine strong Scotland under-18 team for the I.S.A. World Junior Surfing Championships in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, from 24 November – 3 December 2023.

They leave for South America on Friday.

And Finn, who works as a lifeguard at the David Lloyd Club at Shawfair, admits he could not have come on to the surf scene at a better time with Lost Shore, the largest inland facility in Europe, due to open at Ratho next year coinciding – more or less – with the sport appearing in the Paris Olympics.

“I am absolutely stoked at what the Ratho facility will bring to Scottish surfing and if I could make Team GB for the subsequent Olympics in Los Angeles (2028) that would be a dream come true” said Finn.

That would be some journey from where Finn trains as often as possible at Pease Bay on the East coast.

He says: “It started for me six years ago through my dad (Gene) who has always been into surfing and snow boarding.

“It with difficult at first ... and then I discovered a thicker wet-suit!

“Surfing in Scotland is more popular than many would think and I’d estimate 400 regulars on the East of the country alone.”

Without doubt the capital of Scottish surfing is at Thurso and it was there that Finn met good friend Craig McLachlan who arranged for the pair to travel to South Africa earlier this year for essentially a training camp.

“That was an eye-opener in giving me perspective as to what I need to do. But conditions for surfing in parts of Scotland are comparable with anywhere – if a bit lacking in consistency.

“The prospect of competing in Rio has made me super excited and I’m grateful for about £28,000 of fund raising that has been done to allow the team to travel to what will be my biggest event.”

Earlier this year Finn won the Scottish under-18 title and acquitted himself well last week at the British Championships in Newquay where he was admitted to the adult category when the juniors were cancelled due to excessive water swell.

Dad Gene said: “All Finn wants to do is improve his surfing and we are fortunate to have a caravan at Pease Bay which allows extra opportunities.

“He’s done well, too, to qualify as a beach lifeguard as well as becoming a training pool lifeguard so as to be able in future to finance his surfing as and when required.”

Scotland surf coach Martin McQueenie adds: “The 2024 Olympic surfing will actually be held in Tahiti but it is the Los Angeles Games that are a realistic target for Finn who really is a stand out.”

