

Championing Cybersecurity: The National UK Cyber Team's Journey at the European Cyber Security Challenge



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Reflections on coaching, collaboration, and the pursuit of excellence in cybersecurity

From 6th to 10th October 2025, ten exceptional cyber enthusiasts proudly flew the flag for the United Kingdom in the European Cyber Security Challenge (ECSC), held this year in the vibrant setting of Poland.

Marking our return to Europe's most prestigious cybersecurity contest, this milestone was both historic and inspiring. The atmosphere was electric as our talented team, brimming with determination, represented their country with pride and an unbreakable team spirit.

Securing a commendable 22nd place, our team not only demonstrated remarkable skill and perseverance, but also laid the foundation for future British excellence to progress and one day win it with a diverse team. The energy and anticipation in the air were palpable, making each challenge a true showcase of British resilience and ingenuity.

Our team began its journey just a year ago. From 30 of the UK's top young cyber talents, ten were chosen for their exceptional skills to represent the nation at the 2025 European Cyber Security Challenge.

Their enthusiasm, expertise, and remarkable collaboration have set new standards in cybersecurity, qualities I also recognised during my time competing nationally in Sport and representing HMG.

These remarkable individuals truly exemplified the spirit of British cyber innovation, making history as they competed alongside the world's elite. The experience was electrifying, not only for the team, but for everyone involved in backing their journey. It was truly an honour to be selected from so many distinguished experts to lead the talented UK team.

Cybersecurity is a dynamic and demanding field, where every moment tests our preparation, resilience, and adaptability.

With the support of my colleagues at Beyond Blue Limited, I was able to dedicate myself fully to preparing the UK team for the challenges ahead.

Together, we concentrated not only on enhancing our technical capabilities, but also on fostering the core values and mindset necessary for success on the global stage.

What is the ECSC: Europe's Premier Cyber Security Challenge.

The European Cyber Security Challenge is the continental championship of cybersecurity. Each year, top young talent (14-25) from across Europe represent their countries in a dynamic, high-pressure contest, blending technical skill with creativity and teamwork.

The event is a springboard for careers, a celebration of innovation, and a meeting point for the next generation of cyber defenders. Consider it the Olympics of cyber security. Were this an individual event like Cycling. As a coach I would be the equivalent of Sir Dave Brailsford and therefore used his philosophy of installing core values.

The ECSC comprised two principal events: Jeopardy, a puzzle-based challenge akin to a digital treasure hunt, and Attack and Defend, where teams protected their own systems while attempting to breach others, a strategic contest reminiscent of a cyber-attack.





Our ECSC UK Cyber Team Coaches

Despite facing constraints in terms of resources and initial setbacks during training, where the team struggled to conquer certain tasks, perhaps owing to the challenges of remote collaboration, and experience of the challenges, everything changed when the competition began.

The transformation was remarkable; the team rose to the occasion, demonstrating outstanding teamwork under pressure. A defining moment came midway through the Attack and Defend challenge when we checked in with the captains. They remained composed, assuring us that the team was steadfastly following the game plan and on the verge of executing it successfully. I truly believe this visible shift was a direct result of the hidden core values, teamwork, resilience, and empowerment.

Coaching Philosophy: Leadership, Teamwork, and Core Values

Using inspiration of Sir Dave Brailsford I needed to enhance the team not technically, but by strengthening their performance. I did this subtly and slowly, underlining six essential values: teamwork, humility, empowerment, resilience, courage, and transparency. The team are now ready to own them, and I want to showcase where they have used them in the competition.

Teamwork: Success in cybersecurity is never a solo effort. Our shared ethos emphasised collective achievement, and this was evident in the captain selection. Katy and Isaiah were picked not only on their technical abilities but also on the traits of being great leaders.

Humility: We encouraged openness to learning, regardless of rank or experience. The team embraced cross-disciplinary growth, consistently improving and adapting throughout training and competition.

Empowerment: Mistakes are part of growth. Rather than dictating solutions, I sought to empower each member to take ownership, make decisions, and learn from every experience. The captains were empowered to lead the team, and you can see that, whatever the challenge, the team was consistent across both events.

Resilience: The competition presented unexpected challenges. When systems faltered or tasks proved difficult, the team remained calm, communicated openly, and stuck to their game plan, demonstrating maturity under pressure. We talked about the success of quick wins, and I am so proud of the team for becoming the first to solve the “Steganowarmup” challenge in just four minutes, a testament to the preparation and collaboration of this challenge in training.

Courage: This year marked a transition for several team members into representing their country. They performed amazingly and thrived in the pressure, I am pleased they all want to fight for their position in the team and be more successful.

Transparency: Genuine collaboration flourished as team members shared ideas, supported one another, and built connections across international borders. I was so proud of the team making new friendships across the European community as they swapped merch with multiple nations. It is so important to know how to network technically and in human contact.

Looking Forward

Reflecting on this experience, it is clear that our journey extended far beyond the confines of competition. It provided a platform to nurture emerging talent, cultivate leadership, and forge enduring relationships, both among our own team and with international peers, which will help improve the country’s cybersecurity.

As coaches, we have been genuinely inspired by the dedication and spirit shown throughout, and we are determined to push the team to new heights.

While we are at the start of the journey, we can’t do it alone, and we need a diverse set of experts’ sponsorship support to push the team to the next level.

If you’re interested in supporting the team, please do get in touch: ukcyberteam@sans.org

