

# Plumber takes on best in the world

By Kyle Ritchie

kyle.ritchie@hnmmedia.co.uk

A PLUMBER who grew up in Huntly is preparing to take on the world's elite at the WorldSkills Plumbing finals due to be held in Germany.

Connor Cruden, who in 2020 completed his four-year plumbing apprenticeship having come top in 2019 at the SkillPLUMB UK finals to find the country's most accomplished apprentice plumber, is now ready to go global.

The competition, which was originally scheduled to take place last year in Shanghai, China, has been relocated because of continuing Covid-19 restrictions to the Black Forest town of Lahr, Germany, and will take place between November 2 and 4.

It is held under the auspices of Grohe, the leading German plumbing fixtures manufacturer, and will involve participants from 20 countries.

Connor, whose parents are farmers, attended The Gordon Schools and is now based in Turriff, where he works for Cowie Plumbing and Heating.

He said: "I have been training hard for the WorldSkills final,



Connor Cruden with his employer Gary Cowie.

making regular visits to my coach, Ronnie Ferris, who is based in Newry, County Down, and tackling demanding pieces of work and producing them to challenging tolerances.

"All the skills I have developed have come from the guidance of my instructors, Jim MacKinnon at Moray College, my employer Garry Cowie, and of course my parents and my coach.

"I am hugely grateful to all of them, as well as to SNIPEF which

has paved my way to the WorldSkills finals."

Mr Cowie said: "It was clear from the outset that Connor was an exceptional talent, able to absorb complex issues both rapidly and accurately.

"We were all very proud of his achievement in coming top in the 2019 SkillPLUMB UK finals and will be cheering him on all the way in Germany."

Dale Thomson, training manager at SNIPEF training services, said:

"Talents such as Connor's are exceptional but the excellent showing of apprentices from SNIPEF members in competition with others has demonstrated consistently a real strength in depth."

Neil Collishaw, CEO of the BPEC Group, which organise the SkillPLUMB competition, said: "Connor and Samuel are a credit to their employers and colleges, and fantastic ambassadors for the UK plumbing industry as well as anyone considering a career in our industry.

"When they both competed at the SkillPLUMB 2019 UK finals we knew they were destined for greater things.

"We will be supporting Connor all the way at the WorldSkills international competition. His employer and former tutors should be extremely proud of his dedication, quality of work and the standard of skills he is displaying, which truly is world class."

Supported by SNIPEF, Scotland and Northern Ireland's plumbing and heating industry's trade association, and BPEC, the WorldSkills competition enables apprentices to showcase their skills and knowledge of best plumbing practice.