

Camden Swiss Cottage Swimming Club – AGM 24 November 2015

Chair's Report

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting and thank you for attending to support your Club.

I became Interim Chair in May 2015 after the SGM. Fortunately our committee came together as a group very quickly and we had the full support of our staff.

Camden Swiss Cottage Swimming Club is one of the largest in London. For those members who are new, or not familiar with all aspects of our Club, I want to give you a brief overview of what the Club provides.

The Club operates 5 distinct programs:

1. A Learn To Swim Program that gives lessons to approximately 3,500 children and adults per year across 6 venues. This is an important part of what we do as a Club. We provide a valuable service to the community and many of our Development and Competitive swimmers start with lessons. This program is run by our Aquatics Manager, Nuala Muir-Cochrane.
2. 5 Development Swimming squads at 3 venues with approximately 150 children participating. The bulk of these swimmers are at Swiss Cottage. This program is coached by Michelle McCarthy, our lead development coach at Swiss, and Asbjorg Gusftasdottir, our Highgate development coach. Both programs are overseen by Matt Heathcock, our Head Coach.
3. 4 Performance Swimming squads based out of Swiss Cottage that train regularly at 3 venues and sometimes at the London Aquatic Centre for 50 m training. There are approximately 120 swimmers in these squads, which are overseen by our Head Coach, and coached by Matt Heathcock (Elite/Top), Gerry Gillespie (SAGS), and Kylie Bland (JAGS).
4. 4 Club Squads for swimmers aged 11 to 16. Currently approximately 180 swimmers participate in our Club program across 4 venues. This program is coached by Tom Watson and Marc Dillon and is overseen by our Head Coach.
5. A large Masters Program – nearly 3 times as big as any alternative in the London region. The Masters program has approximately 110 total swimmers including 16 in the Junior Masters Program aimed at swimmers 16-18 years old. This program is overseen, and currently primarily coached, by our Head Coach.

In addition to thanking the hardworking staff at Camden Swiss, I would also like to thank

all of the Committee members with whom I've served in the past year. Each person on the Committee has had involvement in at least one of our positive changes this year. It wasn't always linear progress, but we've accomplished a number of things this year as a committee and as a Club. I'd like to list some of the highlights for you.

1. After more than a year of instability, we secured our Head Coach – Matt Heathcock and Assistant Head Coach, Gerry Gillespie, who have both brought stability and excitement back to our Club.
2. We re-branded a tired image and provided new kit for staff and swimmers.
3. We implemented TeamUnify, which brings us in line with a number of top clubs in the country, and makes it easier to enter meets and provide information to our members.
4. We launched a monthly newsletter with news from all areas of our Club. Many of the articles are written by our youth and masters swimmers.
5. We replaced antiquated technology in the office by purchasing new desktops and laptops for our staff and coaches and replaced our email provider.
6. We evaluated and rewrote our Club Constitution to eliminate confusion and contradictions while aligning our Club's constitution with the ASA model constitution.
7. We were once again certified as a Swim 21 Club.
8. We increased standards and implemented criteria for all of our youth squads. These changes have directly translated into higher attendance at training, better team atmosphere, and more personal bests for our swimmers. Matt will certainly speak more to this in his report.
9. We've developed a closer working relationship between our Learn To Swim and Development Programs and have initiated a Talent ID program whereby Matt and Nuala watch our lesson swimmers and invite talented young swimmers to train with our Development Squads.
10. We've reviewed the Club Squad, implementing some changes affording swimmers the opportunity to train for competition or fitness. We've also provided the opportunity to move into Competitive Squads. Previously the movement was only in one direction – from Performance/Development to Club.
11. We've begun to look at our Masters program with a survey and small focus group to determine the best structure for the masters in order to accommodate the full spectrum of swimmers from the competitive to the social. We've added

a new segment called Junior Masters – aimed at the 16-18 year old swimmer who no longer wishes to compete in a Performance Squad.

12. We've reinstated some of our social events beginning with the Picnic at Highgate this autumn. A very special thank you to Indrani Mukherjee for organizing this event.

The Club is in a very good position, but there is always room for improvement. Thankfully, we appear to have both staff and committee committed to continued improvement. Some of the items we need to focus on this year are:

1. More officials – Each club is asked to provide officials when competing in galas and not doing so can result in the inability to participate. Thank you to all who signed up to go through the officials course recently held at Swiss Cottage!
2. More volunteers – We are implementing a Squad Rep Program in the next year. The emphasis is on two way communication between parents/swimmers and coaches. I hope many of will consider getting involved in this and/or other volunteer opportunities.
3. Positive, inclusive energy – More activities and involvement within our swimming community is a lovely way to build a team. Thank you to those who are already contributing by, for example, organizing Club picnics, helping with distributing the team kit, and planning training camp for the masters.
4. Commitments from swimmers and parents to the Club – Our performance squads are a great recent example of this. As Head Coach, Matt made some changes to the squads this season. These changes made the swimmers accountable and increased their requirements. The results in terms of performance and team atmosphere, in just under four months, are commendable. We have hired Matt to lead our Club and we must trust that he and the committee are working to better all areas of our Club. Feedback is important, and the Committee and staff welcome it. We must also realize that sometimes change is needed despite not always being easy.
5. Pool time - Lastly we need to remember that pool time is a critical and highly constrained resource. We must always be thinking of how best to use this resource and be on the lookout for any opportunity to increase it.

In closing, I would like to thank all of you for making the effort to come to this meeting and for supporting your Club tonight and throughout the year. I would also like to thank the following committee members for their service this year who are either no longer on the committee or will step down: Andrew Panteli, Caroline Hookway, Yumi Inaba, Elizabeth Knowles, Elke Rittenhouse and Chris Moran, without whom we would not have updated our IT and made such a smooth transition to TeamUnify.

I am stepping down as Chair as regrettably, I do not have adequate time to dedicate to this role; but I look forward to remaining on the Committee as the Coordinator of the Squad Rep Program. I look forward to working with all of the members of the new committee, and hopefully with many of you as volunteers.

With kindest regards,
Ann-Marie Halsted
Interim Chair – Camden Swiss Cottage Swimming Club