



Notes from the Parent/Swimmer Meeting 01/06/16 at Lansdowne Golf Club

The meeting opened with an introduction from Susie Hann (Chair) giving the background and options open to the club for the future. She explained the support from the Network Clubs was there for a Performance Based model and that is what the club would aim to deliver.

She said the Network would need to pull together and swimmers would have a pathway to and from Aqua Sulis, where they would have the opportunity to achieve their potential and move on to National Programmes or University, or alternatively have the choice to move back to club swimming.

Susie then handed the floor to Jemma Lowe, Double Olympian Butterfly swimmer based at Bath ITC to talk about her swimming journey from club to Olympics.

Highlights of Jemma's talk were

- The commitment level required to get to the top – examples given were
 - Missing out on social life at school
 - Having to get taxis to training as Mum didn't drive
 - Being in the call room for a 200fly race instead of at her School Prom
- The personal dedication and ownership of her own training
 - Selection for a meet in Australia in her GCSE year meaning 8 weeks away from school. Others told her she would fail her GCSEs, but she took her school work with her and proved everyone wrong by getting 10 GCSEs grade A* to C
 - She decided she needed to do more if she was to achieve a higher level so started running before morning training and doing extra Gym sessions.
- The support around her
 - Parents were important in getting her to training and competition and paying for it
 - Coach and swimmer relationship is important, but she didn't always see eye to eye with her coach. She was told she was a fly swimmer, but insisted she was a backstroker. Coach was right!
 - Advice on Nutrition important as she got older, but as a young swimmer she just ate loads.

She said she was extremely proud of her achievements especially being the only female British swimmer to make a 200fly final at the Olympics and coming 6th was amazing. She said the focus is always on the medal winners, but to make the final was a great result and something to be proud of.

She was asked if she had kept a log book. She said yes she had to as part of the programme she was in and it was good to look back to see what she had done.

She also answered another question to say she had no regrets about the path she had chosen and that you have to go for it if you want to succeed.

Jemma was thanked and said she would answer any further questions so if anyone has anything they would like to know about swimming at the top level please submit your question to Susie and she will ask Jemma.

John then introduced the New Structure and Criteria.

He started with some background about himself listing his swimming career as

- Started swimming aged 5 years old
- First competitive swim aged 6 years old
- Diddy League swimmer 7-11 years old
- First County Age Group time aged 12 years old
- First County Final aged 13 years old
- First County medal aged 13 years old
- First Scottish National medal aged 13 years old
- First Scottish Squad Selection/Cap aged 13 years old
- 11/11 County Age Group titles 1990
- 5/5 County Junior Mens titles 1990
- 2nd Scottish International Cap
- 4 Scottish National titles and 1 National record 1990
- 6 medals at National Age Groups 1990 (1 gold 2 silver 3 bronze)
- 1991-93
- 4 further National titles and 1 National record
- 3 further Scottish Caps
- English Schools representation
- GB representation

He then went on to list his Coaching achievements including

- Part of coaching team that helped Daniel Sliwinski break British Record for 100 Breaststroke in 2009.
- Coached swimmers onto Junior European teams
- Coached swimmers onto National Programmes
- Coach of Top Age Group Club 2007
- Coach at European Juniors OW 2008
- Coach on GB/Home Nation OW Junior Programme 2008-2013
- Coach on Scottish Programmes 2009-2013

He floated the idea of changing the name of the club to identify where we come from and recognise the role the Network played. His suggestion was to become the Bath Network Swim Squad. This will be further explored and Susie confirmed in a question asked later in the meeting that the programme needed to be established as the first priority.

The National and Regional Squad Criteria was then introduced. John stated that the document was **aspirational** for Aquae Sulis at the present time, but that he had used it previously at two clubs where he coached, the swimmers met the criteria in both and he was confident it had a proven track record and he could deliver it.

He highlighted the following as key to success

- Raise standard gradually
- Swimmers & parent education
- National Squad 25 swimmers
- Regional Squad 45 swimmers
- Exit Strategy

Short Term Goals

- Develop volunteer network & mentoring programme
- Promote and develop Network Clubs
- Development of Network coaches
- Partnerships with Performance Centres
- Swimmers to National finals/National squad selection

Medium Term Goals

- Improve self-sustainability of programme
- Clearly defined pathway for swimmers and coaches in the Network
- Established education/development hub
- Operational coach mentoring programme
- Swimmers on International teams

Long Term Goals

- Established self-sustainable programme
- Possible expansion of squad
- Continued progression of swimmers and coaches in the Network
- Swimmers consistently representing at National and International level
- Former Network swimmers making Olympic/Paralympic Games (senior international)

He then stated the Minimum Level of Commitment for Swimmers as follows

- Training programme
- Competition programme
- Attitude
- Coachability
- Support

And Advice given to help with achievement

- Commit
- Give up trying to control the uncontrollable
 - every swimmer is different and John will coach each one according to their needs so forget what the swimmer next to you is doing and concentrate on you.
- Develop
 - both in and out of the water
 - communicate with the coach
- Be honest
 - if you are asked if you have done your best don't kid yourself or the coach if you haven't.
 - If you report back to parents give the whole story.
- Listen to advice

He then spoke about his annual plan and how competition sits in the training programme with some meets identified as “swim through” meaning the swimmers do not taper or rest for the meet. He said the training regime and competition programme is designed to put the swimmers under stress, swimming when tired and allowing them to make mistakes learning to work on auto-pilot with the skills cemented so that when they arrive at key meets, rested and fresh they can perform well.

Questions were invited

Question: Will Development Squad Swimmers be returned to club?

Reply: Some who are not ready for the programme, yes. Clubs are aware that swimmers may return to them and they are happy to accommodate them, indeed some pleased to have back swimmers they didn't feel were ready for Aquae Sulis.

Question: Will there be changes to the training timetable?

Reply: The timetable has been reviewed and we are awaiting confirmation of the pool availability from the University, which should happen in the next couple of weeks. Both squads will train together for the majority of sessions, which will be better for the development of both swimmers and coaches.

Question: With the financial sustainability required will there be an increase in fees?

Reply: Yes. The fees have been reviewed and are set at an equal hourly rate based on the number of training hours available to each squad. Regional at £98 and National at £110. This is in line with other similar programmes, which range between £90 and £120.

Question: Will the Network Clubs be asked to review their charges made to swimmers at Aquae Sulis?

Answer: The Network Clubs will be encouraged to support by only charging a minimal rate to Aquae Sulis members as they have requested the programme, but it is down to them to set their fees and it was suggested that parents get together as a group to ask for a review at their home club.

Question: Is there a published timetable of who will be coaching at which session?

Reply: John said there will be 5 supporting coaches working with him to cover training and Susie added that the fact the squads will train together means there will be better support from John for all.

The meeting concluded with news of swimmers who had qualified for British and English Summer Nationals, with John reporting the number qualifying had increased from last year.