

Head Coach's Report

I would like to start by thanking everyone for their support over the past year. It was not an easy decision to stop training and take over as Head Coach. The club has seen many inspirational coaches over the years and the prospect of trying to step into their shoes was very daunting. However, it is only from this position that I have been able to appreciate the efforts and work of these people who have brought the club to where it is today.

The most important thing in this club is the swimmers and you have all worked hard this year. You are all different. Some of you break records, some of you swim in galas, some of you don't, some of you come to see your friends, some of you come to keep fit and quite a few of you have been coming for years! You are all just as important as the next person and none of you go unnoticed. This year I have been incredibly proud to take teams to galas. There have been some outstanding performances where club records have been broken. It has been brilliant to see so many of you break PBs in club championships and time trials. I am proud of swimmers who have completed a length underwater or learnt to dive or tumble turn. I hope that you keep up the good work. I know that sometimes training can be challenging mentally and physically and I know that sometimes it can be very hard to motivate yourselves to repeatedly swim up and down the pool while your dragon-like coaches force you to turn, count and repeat things. Our job is to get the best from you. We want you to achieve something you didn't think was possible. We want you to be faster, stronger and better.

I would like to thank the parents who provide transport for their children to training and galas. I am still convinced that spending evenings in a hot stuffy spectator area watching your child swim up and down will eventually catch on as a great night out! I know that for those who travel to galas you are often charged for this privilege of feeling tired and thirsty whilst waiting all evening for your child to swim just a couple of lengths and I would like you to know that we really do appreciate this because without you we would not be able to field a team.

We have had several competitions this year. We are always faced with some challenging teams in The Arena League and I was impressed with how our swimmers coped and it was nice to see so many PBs. The Major League also saw us finish comfortably. For many younger swimmers it was their first time competing in galas this year. There were some fantastic performances and after a tough start we came back fighting to stay in Division 2 for another year. I hope we can improve on these results next year as the team is showing a lot of promise.

We were away in Wulfrath this year for the club's 39th exchange visit. As usual our hosts gave us a fantastic week of activities and looked after us in style. Our team was a credit to the club and after a close battle with our friends at the mid-week swimming gala we had to admit defeat. It is looking very positive in all areas of training for the 40th exchange next year where a clean sweep of trophies on home turf would be a fitting celebration for this special and unique occasion. We do have the home advantage so this means that we have some big decisions to make in terms of the team – 'wrinkleys' need to train hard! I hope to see as many of you involved as possible during such a special week.

There are also swimmers who have had some very successful open meets this year. I hope that next year more of you will take the opportunity to enter these events.

I would like to thank those of you that have officiated for us this year. You do a great job in making galas and time trials possible! I would like to thank the committee for the work and support that they give to the club which often goes unseen or unrecognised. A big thank you also goes to the team managers who put a lot of effort into picking teams followed by a lot of stress re-picking the teams!

I am proud to say the club is the biggest it has ever been and I could not do this job without the help of the poolside team. I think this year they have been an inspiration. It is so lovely to see swimmers putting time back in to the club for those younger than themselves. They are coaching, timekeeping and judging. I hope that this will continue for the unseen future.

It is an honour to be Head Coach as the club moves in to its 80th year.

Claire Matthews