

## **HEAD COACH'S REPORT APRIL 2009** **'RNSS HOUSE' Hillingdon Swimming Club**

This has been another fast paced year with plenty for Hillingdon Swimming Club to be proud of. We have been successfully operating as one unit under the name Hillingdon Swimming Club for over a year now with the home squads and the elite squads continuing to flourish strongly.

### **New Teachers and Coaches**

After the summer, I was sorry to see Emma Yates leave our club to concentrate on a full time teaching position at a primary school following her successful University degree. The gap in our coaching staff allowed Colin Hick, who is an integral part of our Junior Section, to broaden his skills into the coaching area. The transition has been smooth with Colin settling in well to coaching Junior Potential squad.

Our senior swimmers continue to be a major asset within the club both with the squads and in the Junior Section. Amy Claridge, (herself an ex HBEST swimmer), has made a good start heading the Junior Section assisted by Meghan Wilson. They are surrounded by good quality teachers, mainly senior swimmers from our club who have taken their first teaching certificate. Congratulations to Russell Heath, Olivia Lawrence and Matthew Gandy who are the latest to have passed their Level 1 Teaching Certificate, and Michael Jones and Tara Mead who passed their Junior Helpers Certificate. Well done to all these.

### **Change of Training Times**

In January, more training time became available at St Helen's pool following its termination of member provisions. This allowed me the chance to extend training times for SC to 90mins on a Monday and deal with the issue of late training times on Thursdays. No longer do some squads have to train until 10pm as I have now been able to move everything forward an hour.

This has been much better, especially for the younger members of these squads.

I was also able to change the unpopular Sunday lunch time slot for the Junior Squads to the afternoon at St Helen's which has also resulted in higher attendance at this session.

### **Junior Masters**

One area to especially benefit from these changes has been the growth of Junior Masters. This squad now train along side Senior County on a Thursday in the new 8pm to 9pm, so it has become accessible to more people. The members in here often have another key sport and use this session to maintain their aerobic fitness whilst concentrating on their other sport, or just want to swim to keep fit rather than do lots of training to compete. This is an ideal opportunity to stay in sport and maintain the social aspect, without the commitment of having to do galas. This is successfully filling a gap that was missing from our club.

## **DIDDY LEAGUE**

We had another first this year as we entered the Milton Keynes Junior League under our new name rather than dividing our resources between an RNSS team and a Seabyrds team. This has been something we have been working towards for many years, but lots of red tape prevented it from happening sooner. To achieve this however, it did mean we had to sacrifice a place in Division 1 for one team, but we did manage to clinch a place for a second team in Division 2.

Our swimmers were hugely successful in both Divisions, with many swimmers switching between teams depending on performance, the varying relevant age cut off dates, illness/injury etc. We finished in September with Hillingdon Swimming Club winning both the Division 1 and Division 2 trophies and the rewards that came with this, promotion to Division 1 for the 'B' team and a place in the southern semi-final for the 'A' Team. Third place in the semi secured a trip to Liverpool for the National final in November against the best junior teams in the country.

This allowed some very excited swimmers to experience their first overnight stay to compete in a high class team gala. Hillingdon finished a very creditable 6<sup>th</sup> place.

Concerns from some people that the number of swimmers involved in the Diddy competition would drop with joint teams, were completely allayed when the numbers actually increased. Previously we had had to fielded teams often very stretched with a few swimmers doing lots of races, but this year we were able to select more swimmers for specific races, resulting in a huge number of swimmers involved in this popular competition for the first time.

We competed in the M.11 Junior League with an RNSS house team for the last time this year. After having won the first round, coming 2<sup>nd</sup> in the second round, we eventually came third (once the erroneous scoring had been rectified) in the final. The reason to withdraw from this League is because of the conflict of interest should we end up winning both the M.11 and Milton Keynes League as both winners are expected to represent their League in the Southern Semi – final. We could not possibly field two teams of a strength required at that high level and would have to disappoint one of the Leagues which would not be acceptable. We have therefore sadly had to resign from the M.11 League.

## **Main Club Championships**

The main club championships in November, was again very well attended with both swimmers and supporters. The now established format, and the army of volunteer helpers, ensured the huge number of swims were efficiently processed in the short amount of time we had. Records continued to be broken with Tegan Drew claiming two in the Mini Star Backstroke and Freestyle events. All the U/16 girls' events had records broken with Francesca Marr claiming the Breaststroke, Freestyle and Fly and Sophie Wilson taking the Backstroke.

The boys were not to be out done with Leon Berchie taking the U/12 Fly, Adam Wood the U/14 Backstroke and Fly. The Open age group boys also had a clean sweep of new records. Luke Spain took the Open Fly and Breaststroke, Tom Randall the Backstroke and Daniel Davies the Freestyle.

## **Other Club Championships and Internal Galas**

The change I made to the Individual Medley Club Champs last year was very successful with the introduction of the 200m IM. I have noticed more people now entering this event at Open galas after having had the opportunity to 'have a go' in a friendly atmosphere. It has also led to the introduction of another Trophy for the younger swimmers who are now the only ones eligible for the shorter 100m IM event.

In January this year, I also changed the format of the Splash Night Novice gala, to one that was far more inclusive for younger swimmers and with more relevant distances to compete in. This worked very well and I will be adopting this programme for our future Novice galas. So next year there will be lots of records available to be broken as all the 50m events will have had the standard set by January's gala.

Well done to Naomi Ayrton who broke the 100m FC record at this gala.

The 200m Freestyle and Fly, 200m Back and Breast and 400m FC Club Champs held throughout the year, continue to be very well attended by the younger swimmers, but not so well from some of the senior squads. The older swimmers can be a good role model for our emerging swimmers, so I will be keen to change this recent trend that has developed.

That said, again the records continue to fall for the boys with Luke Spain claiming the 200m Fly, FC and Breaststroke titles and Oliver Kenway taking the 100m IM record.

The in-house Novice Relay gala I had put on the calendar for the end of March has had to be re scheduled due to a heavy work load on my part, but I have re programmed this for May. I am very keen to re stage this successful programme of relay events which saw our senior swimmers mentoring our youngest swimmers in what was a fun competitive introduction to racing. It is important that the young ones get some experience at racing and I will work hard to get it planned and ready for then.

## **Team Galas**

Our success with team galas outside of the Junior League has been equally successful. We took part in a few new ones this season including The Clifford Memorial gala hosted by Bracknell & Woking SC. This was a graded long course team event at Aldershot Garrison offering the opportunity to gain experience competing in a 50m pool. We won this and came away with the trophy.

Another new gala was The Eric Penwell Relay Gala hosted by Edmonton Phoenix at Southbury Road. This was mainly for the younger age groups, but was good fun and again we came away with the trophy after also winning this one.

We took part in our usual seasons' opener, the Witney Relay gala in September which always sees a friendly battle between us and a strong Maxwell team. This year, they pipped us to top spot and we had to settle for 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

The Aylesbury Christmas Graded Team Gala proved very difficult this year being just five days before the 'Big day', as so many families had festive events already planned. However, a full team was fielded, but after not scoring on all but two relays

for going far too fast and yet being within the time for most individual events, we will not be doing this one again unless the time standards for the relays change as I can't take one group of swimmers to meet the individual times and another group to meet the relay times.

The usual Amersham Novice team galas were convincingly won by us and provoked complaints that we are not fielding novices. With the teams consisting of non Diddy league swimmers and the youngest age group using 7 and 8 year olds in some cases and the rest never having competed before, I'm not sure how much more of a novice team we can field.

The Broomfield Park Team galas at Southgate Pool and Southbury Road pool have been a good challenge for us finishing middle of the pack on both of these. We have another of these next month and with the inclusion of a parent's race (one for the ladies and one for the men), I will be looking for eight volunteers to show their children how it is done!! It is all FC and one length each, so please don't hold back when asked.

### **Open Galas**

The pick of the Open meets this year was the Black Swan Staines open gala. Despite this being its inaugural year, it was well organised, with plenty of events to choose from and it was held at a good venue. With a large entry from our club (even though we had a lot of rejected entries), our swimmers went on to collect many trophies and this resulted in Hillingdon collecting the Top Club Award. On an individual basis, Lucy Crump and Shannon Green took top girls awards in their age groups and Marco Navarro top boy award in his age group. Many other swimmers were placed very close to also taking one of these slots.

Wycombe B/C Graded Gala was also very successful for Hillingdon Swimming Club. This was well attended and we showed our strength in all age groups right through to open, which again resulted in us collecting the Top Club Award. Being a 50m pool ( a rare breed), with very friendly hosts, I am always keen to travel to this pool and the Wycombe sprint meet was again well attended with many individual successes. The forms are out again for this one, so make sure you get the entries back by Friday.

Hillingdon also entered Open meets at Maxwell in the summer and autumn, but there were very large numbers of rejections which made it a bit awkward for families that ended up with the odd swim here and there. I will be seeking suitable other galas to try out to ensure we have a good range of galas available for all.

### **Middlesex Counties**

The standard at this years' County Championships continues to impress with success after success in individual and relay events and County Awards. I am sure Dave Hemmings will be reporting on all the highs of these three weekends, so I will not

repeat it all other than to say that any coach involved at Hillingdon Swimming Club, cannot fail to be proud of the swimmers' achievements.

The Middlesex County Development Meet has changed to a better format this year with it being run as a B/C gala combined. I have asked for this to happen for ages and this is a definite improvement but they have still got some unnecessary complications to what should be a good gala. Perhaps by next year these will also be addressed. With a large number of entries from Hillingdon, there were triumphs in this weekend's events, with many swimmers posting County Qualifying times and therefore collecting speeding tickets, medals and rosettes. I am sure that next Saturday will see us closing the gala equally as successful.

### **Awards for the Club**

In March this year, Hillingdon Council held its first award Ceremony for recognizing sporting achievement in their Borough. Hillingdon Swimming Club featured strongly after receiving three awards for the Club, the Inter-Borough Team and the London Youth Games Team. There was also an individual award for Francesca Marr after her success in being selected to represent Great Britain in the European Junior Squad.

### **In House Stroke Clinics**

Hillingdon Swimming Club has conducted two in house stroke clinics at John Lyon Pool. About 40 young swimmers not already in HBEST were selected from Hillingdon and Sea- Byrds to attend these sessions and they have been hugely popular. The first was on Backstroke with drill and stroke demonstrations from the best BC swimmers in HBEST, Tom Randall, Adam Wood, Karley Mann and Callum Mitchell. The second was on Breaststroke with demonstrations from Francesca Marr and Georgia Collins. Dave Hemmings had earlier filmed many breaststroke drills and put together a DVD which the swimmers could take away with them to reinforce what they had just learned.. Both days were very inspirational to all who attended.

### **Presentation Night**

I thought the turn out for last year would be hard to beat, but a majority turn out again this year, ensured it was a success. Among the many trophies handed out, a new trophy donated by the Club's President and his wife, Daphne and Maurice Short was to be awarded. This was to go to someone who we thought deserved recognition for something they had done which contributes in some way to the club. The first recipient of this trophy, with a unanimous vote was Ellie South. She helps coach the younger ones, is always smiling, reliable, is eager to help and learn and is a fantastic role model to swimmers in the club. Well done Ellie.

## **HBEST**

It is always my desire to get swimmers to the high standard required to make the move to the elite squads of Hillingdon Swimming Club. Many show early signs of having the technical ability, but not the desire, and others the desire but not the technical ability. It is difficult for coaches to ensure that the right swimmers make the move at the right time. Go too soon and they can 'sink' under the demands being made of them and they can fall out of the sport. Time it right and they can flourish. Not all swimmers develop at the same time and sometimes it takes a while for the talent to emerge, or for them to show us they have what it takes to cope mentally with the physical aspects.

If a swimmer is not moved with some of their peers at an early age that does not mean they have been denied a path to HBEST. All swimmers at Hillingdon Swimming Club are constantly reviewed on their training ability, skill levels and performance at galas etc and if it is felt they would benefit from a move to HBEST they will be invited at an appropriate time in the training cycle.

A recent example of this process is Luke Spain who at 15 years moved to HBEST in September (I did try and convince him to move 6 months earlier, but he took a bit of persuading!) He has now achieved his National Qualifying time for 100m Breast and very close to a few more, so well done to him and to Dave Hemmings for all the work you have done with him.

## **Finally**

Thanks again to all the volunteers that help make Hillingdon Swimming Club so successful. In particular I would like to mention Debbie Wilson, Rosemary Harrington, Joanne Lawrence and Sue Dyer who do so much work away from the poolside to keep us running smoothly. Martin South, Trevor Hammond and John Greenwood for all their help in processing the galas, Tina Benson who has stepped in to run Corgi so the gala results are recorded electronically and all the parents who have been willing (or pressed!!) to time keep or offer their services as squad reps. Hillingdon Swimming Club cannot run without you.

Lesley Westendorp  
Head Coach