



From the coaches 27:10.17

“Enjoy the journey”

There is a famous expression, “Be careful what you wish for, you might just get it.” So it was with no little trepidation that we recently agreed to ask swimmers and parents your opinions of the club, and how it can be improved. We had a tremendous response, and are grateful for your participation and honesty.

One of the things that came out strongly was that you want better communication from the coaches.

Now whilst daily communication should be between coach and swimmer, there will of course be occasions when parents or guardians want to meet up and discuss particular issues – and we remain very open to having those conversations. (If you ever find this difficult, please let us know directly of via our parent rep Rachel Cahill).

In a club such as ours, which often feels more like an extended family, the coaches are not unaware of the importance of the sport and the club in people’s lives. It is therefore incumbent on us to be open and transparent in sharing our thoughts and perspectives with you.

And that is why I will be now be sharing a regular, personal update with you all.

Now I can’t promise they’ll be issued religiously on the same day every month, but I shall make every effort to send them out regularly as we go through events, galas and major points in our calendar. If there are topics I don’t cover that you think I should, let me know directly, via the suggestion box outside the CIP meet office or via head.coach@cardiffswimming.co.uk

So where should I start as we approach Halloween?

The Club Champs seems a long time ago somehow – time and tide waits for no man.

Given there were trophies up for grabs, people might wonder why we hold it so early in the season. To be honest I think it works well for us as a club – it gets swimmers to practise their race-faces before the serious competitions begin. It’s never going to be about times, but it is a good opportunity for swimmers to remember how to prepare and race.

The Arena League seems to have come around awfully, quickly doesn’t it? It seems like only yesterday that we were all whooping and hollering at the National Arena Swimming League Finals, held again last year in Cardiff – what an honour that was for the club and the city, and what a result coming third, hot on the heels of two other Western Region clubs: Millfield and Plymouth Leander.

Swimmers are chosen to represent the club in this competition based on a combination of factors: PB times is of course a factor, as is swimmers’ ability to cover more than one event in the event of sickness or injury. This is a competitive club and the Arena League is the biggest stage on which to perform; our goal is to get the best team result in every single round.

I was delighted with both the A and B Team Round 1 performances – it’s early in the season, and although that’s the same for all clubs, we really seem to have got out of the blocks well. I was especially proud of the behaviour of the teams, representing the Capital City of Wales so well.

The following weekend saw two large parties of swimmers competing at the Manchester International Swim Meet, as well as the Greater Gwent Meet in Newport. Both of these meets were great opportunities for our swimmers to further develop their race plans and arena skills.

The Manchester competition attracted some of GB’s top swimmers, including Olympic gold medallist and world record holder Adam Peaty, so the opposition was tough. However, the party of sixteen swimmers excelled, making 38 finals between them with our own Xavier Castelli placed in the top six swims.

At the Greater Gwent meet, the Cardiff contingent was the dominant force, and it was great to see wave after wave of outstanding performances from our swimmers. It was particularly good to see such great pbs and racing skills from the Competitive White squad who really made their mark at this meet. I was happy to report that all of the squad coaches who attended over the weekend were delighted with the attitude and behaviour of our swimmers as well as the superb swims.

I would urge swimmers and parents alike to remember that we are still in the early part of the season. Swimmers are getting their fitness and stamina back after the summer break, and none of us should be expecting record-breaking performances. Remembering to stick to your core skills is much more important for us coaches at this stage.

Before we know it we'll be into the Welsh Capital Open Meet and the Swansea Winter Nationals, both of which are being held as a Long Course events as many senior swimmer still have the opportunity to qualify for the Commonwealth Games. It seems a little unfair on the younger swimmers at this stage of the season, but it is all for the greater good, and I hope swimmers will meet some fantastic swimmers in their home pools.

Squad Moves: In recent weeks, we've been able to move a few individuals through the squad structure. These decisions have been based on recent performances, potential, and age. The coaches meet regularly to discuss the best squad for each swimmers' circumstances and development. When we set up the current structure, we encouraged people not to think of moves between squads as up or down. Our combined years of experience tells us that swimmers have different needs at different phases of their development—physical, educational, and psychological. Our role is to give each swimmer the best opportunity to develop at each stage of their life, whilst managing different age groups, balancing squad numbers, as well as accounting for finite pool and coaching resources.

It is, of course, human nature for youngsters and parents to want to progress quickly through the squads. It is difficult to see peers move to different squads, and indeed to move into new squads, sometimes away from your friends, but rest assured we consider all of these factors when moving swimmers between squads.

Lanzarote: It looks like we'll have a full house for our first training camp in Lanzarote next February. This will give some of our age group and youth swimmers a brilliant opportunity to take part in an overseas camp in a world-famous sports centre of excellence: Club La Santa. Later next year, the senior swimmers will again take a training camp in Majorca.

In future editions of this update, I hope to be able to give you a brief overview of what each squad is concentrating on, and what aspects swimmers will be developing in the coming weeks and months.

In the meantime, I wish every single swimmer good health, hard training and continued friendships. Remember that happiness is not a destination, life is all about learning how to enjoy the journey.

Finally, I'd like to thank the committee, volunteers, parents & guardians without whom none of this would be possible.

I hope found this update helpful, and I look forward to sharing more views from the coaches in the weeks to come.

Graham