

AGM 2013

This is the first time a Coaches report has been delivered prior to the end of the season. The last time I stood delivering such a speech we had just had our most successful ever season. Performance levels across the club had increased significantly, culminating in Gloucester swimmers winning 7 medals at last years National Championships. This year, I believe we have an even better base on which to gauge our year.

We had an extremely difficult pathway through the Arena league but we still won our final gala to lift our league position, we have developed more and more swim skills swimmers through the Four Seasons rounds of galas, we have attended very successfully Open meets at level 1,2 and 3 and we continue to run our own level 2 and 3 meets with increasing efficiency. I know our reputation grows and grows in terms of delivering excellent meets.

We also won the County Championship medal table more convincingly than ever, we finished third in the Western County Championships medal table (again a top result and only beaten by Plymouth Leander and the Taunton Deane hub) we have just had 7 swimmers competing at the Schools Nationals, winning 6 medals, and have 18 swimmers now qualified for ASA Nationals. In swimming terms, that's a hugely successful season!

I have to say, however, I don't believe this is where the biggest developments in the club have come this year. I stated last year, we faced big challenges in terms of dealing with expectations, of managing those expectations, of improving the environments for future development and success and for delivering accordingly. This club continues to evolve and develop. We should actually never forget where the club was just two years ago, and how quickly the advances have come. Managing through that period has taken great skill. Last year we developed a new structure, which has allowed us to continue to advance. This year we've acted once more to try to give all swimmers a better environment to succeed, and to continue to follow the agreed pathway over the coming years. The club has now got almost 190 swimming members. Developing a pathway for those swimmers and parents to buy into is one thing, putting in place a timetable that works for all groups is quite another.

To their great credit, the management of the club have listened to its coaches and tried exceptionally hard to implement their wishes. The club has had (and I hope continues to have after this meeting) a great committee and especially an Executive committee. They have guided the club expertly through a period of considerable change, and have done so with skill, hours and hours of unpaid commitment, just because they have a passion to make GCSC a better place than it's been before, and to carry out the wishes of the membership on a day to

day, hour by hour basis. A better environment to succeed. Believe me I know, as I've attended meetings in the middle of the day when most of us are at work, doing day jobs etc but the commitment shown by the exec has allowed the club to be guided, has allowed us to become profitable, and has allowed the club to improve its environment to succeed continually. I thank the committee for investing so much time, expertise and money into our development. The new timetable for 2013/14 has more pool time, new squads, extra land training, as well as a new paid coach, who's remit is to develop swimskills and to allow the club to develop internally. The pathway for all, the environment for all continues to improve, and must do so. It is down to excellent leadership, guidance and trust that these things are possible at all. Often too this has been done with questions and comment by people not quite understanding the complete process. Positivity is something that absolutely aids development, negativity quashes it. It's not always the easy option to have a positive standpoint, but it is certainly in the best interests of all and ultimately the club to aim to be positive throughout. I would like to personally thank Marcus, Sue and Duncan for their excellent leadership and their full support throughout the year. It's not always plain sailing, but I believe the end result of our achievements over the past few years is largely due to their leadership.

The club also developed and supported an education process I believe not bettered in the region. It is that that has allowed us to develop from within our own coaching and teaching workforce. And how have we needed all those coaches this year.

Starting with a Young Volunteers programme, the club has supported internally anyone wishing to take swimming education and to help the club in terms of volunteer hours and payback. I have received many comments from outside the club about the fact we continually provide excellence and numbers in developing educated personnel. The Young Volunteers programme has been outstanding. We ran an internal closed course for teachers to become coaches. These things don't just happen, but takes organization and action. I would like to give my personal thanks to all the coaches, teachers and helpers who have added their input and commitment to allowing us to provide what we do for our swimmers. Without that mainly volunteer workforce, this club would not, and could not continue. We have probably been the most developmental club certainly in the region, and if not further afield, these past few years.

The Disability squad continues to evolve and grow, and the results they have achieved this year have been very strong. The reputation we have in our commitment to disability swimming continues to grow at the very highest levels. It's just another area where the club has not accepted mediocrity, and has not stood still. The Disability squad has grown, and is hopefully going to continue to grow, and again trying to give them the best environment to develop is not easy.

It is however, something we try very hard to do, and to embrace within the clubs ultimate boundaries..

The new season will see yet another new section with a developing link with Gloucestershire University. That link has again evolved over time with numerous meetings and time spent seeing how it is possible to offer 18+ swimmers the opportunity in a cost effective way, to continue with their sport and to aid the club in many ways. University students have over the past couple of years become more involved with teaching and coaching, but links will develop more and more over the coming years. There will hopefully be a new squad for 17/18+ swimmers, new opportunities for University students to become involved in management. New disability opportunities through the University, in general, increased links with an Education establishment we've never utilised previously. Continual development throughout.

And I suppose that really is the focus of this speech and of the priority for the coming seasons. The club has grown, and the results and achievements are ultimately there for all to see. They are what comes out of an excellent structure, and from the dedication and effort many put in. The club 2 years ago stated an aim and a pathway it wanted to follow. The focus now is no different from then. We are now in a position to invest in swimmers and their environments to succeed. The excellent management of the club has meant we can now invest in development of coaches, of extra pooltime, and improved facilities, and the enrichment of the masses. I have to say I get very frustrated in hearing the phrase "it's all about the top guys"! How are those "top"swimmers actually produced? More than ever this year they have been produced from within. From our own developing sections. Look at our County results, our District Age-Group results, and actually ultimately our National Qualifiers, and the vast majority are Age Groupers who have developed from within our own structure. That is the case this year actually more than ever before. Recognising that, and the desire to develop that even further, from within, by developing our structure from the bottom up, is what the next few years are about.

We continue to aim to follow the predetermined pathway, to develop a club that is on a sound financial footing (it's only a couple of years since the club was actually operating at a lose and eating into reserves), to develop and invest in our environments, to invest in our own personnel internally, to develop new and exciting opportunities within the sport, the locality, and for our own members, and to continue the pathway of development we began just a few years ago. A look at the Honours Board on the balcony shows what ultimately can be achieved by a few at the top of the swimming pathway. It's the privileged and ultra dedicated few that can attain that level. We do try, and we should make no excuses for admitting we want to give more the opportunity to achieve to that level, but they won't and can't without the club, and actually, the club would also find it difficult

without them. We are one club, trying to develop, trying to succeed, sometimes against the odds, but there are many trying very hard to give the members of GCSC the very best to succeed, to enjoy, and to make this the most memorable experience and ride they can have, and we can give them.

Thank you.