

EU Swim Newsletter



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Before beginning this month's edition of the newsletter, we would like to extend our thoughts and prayers to the Italian teams and to their friends and families in the wake of the recent tragedy. We wish them all the best.

We next present the recent successes of teams from Great Britain and Hungary. Coach Michael Brooks of the United States also returns in this edition with some words of wisdom on the trials and tribulations of age group swimmers.

I ask for your article contributions for the May edition of the newsletter, to be published on the 15th of May.

Please send your news to newsletter@euswim.org I look forward to hearing from you!

*Julia Galan
Director, EU Swimming Invitational*

Fantastic Win for Kingsbury Aquarius Swimming Club

*Mark Jenkins
Press Officer,
Kingsbury Aquarius Swimming Club, Great Britain*



Kingsbury Aquarius Swimming Club comprehensively won the invitational Tom Wellings Trophy Relay Gala by a margin of 33 points at Wombourne Leisure Centre on Saturday 4th April 2009 having produced a performance that deserved a great deal of credit to all of the swimmers who took part.

The team produced some fantastic performances against some strong competition and the other teams involved in the gala were Bilston, Wolverhampton and Wombourne Swimming Clubs.

During the evening out of the 37 races completed Kingsbury won a staggering 23 of them with some very impressive times being swam by all of the team.

During the evening there were 43 personal best times produced by the squad which continues to show significant improvements with swimmers times.

The team swam with confidence and all the team should be praised with special acknowledgments to Perrie Beattie, Natalie Bree, Clare Brookes, Stacey Cameron, Stephanie Cameron, Chris Ellis, Tom Ellis, Courtney Foster, Tori Foster, John Friend, Megan Gough, Jess Grady, Amelia Hughes, Simon Hughes, Kieron Humpherston, Alex Jenkins, Danny McDermott, Liam McGurk, Lucy Manton, Alex Mears, Beth Morrin, Emily Morrin, Kirsty Morrin, Aimee Moulton, Jack Moulton, Louis Oliver, Ajay Patel, Emily

Payne, Natalie Quinney, Stuart Rainsford, Tom Rainsford, Alex Rogers, William Smart, Brian Strugnell, Erin Strugnell, Shaun Strugnell, Luke Thompson, Becky Varney

This was the first time this year the clubs 'Masters' squad had an opportunity to show the younger swimmers how it is done and produced some very good results by winning 3 out of the six races they competed in.

Congratulations to Kingsbury! For more information about the team, please check out their web site on www.kingsburysc.co.uk.

«

Lavotha Takes Silver in Hungarian International Competition

*Peter Lavotha
Club Laguna, Miskolc, Hungary*

The Arany Űst Kupa. (Golden Cup) international swimming competition took place in Dunaújváros, Hungary from 8-10 April 2009.

Flora Lavotha, champion swimmer from Club Laguna Miskolc and EU Swimming Invitational record-holder, was selected to participate in the competition as a member of the Hungarian Youth Team.



Flora had two major successes at the competition, taking home the silver medal in the 100m butterfly with a time of 1:05.31 as well as the silver medal in the 200m butterfly with a time of 2:22.55.

Congratulations to Flora and Club Laguna for their accomplishments! «

THE WONDERS AND PERILS OF GETTING OLDER: AGING UP & THE AGE GROUPER

Michael Brooks

Head Coach, York YMCA, Pennsylvania (USA)

It is interesting that very often we will see a huge push just before swimmers “age up.” In the several weeks or few months before their birthdays, they will come to practice much more and work much harder than usual as they gear up mentally and physically for their last meet, when they want to go out with a bang. And quite often we do see major time drops in a swimmer’s last meet in an age group.

Then, the birthday. Lots of presents, but the feeling is bittersweet, as the gifts are accompanied by a promotion to the older age group. Getting older is often a huge shock to the system of younger swimmers who have been very successful: suddenly they are not the superstars, suddenly they aren’t winning, suddenly they aren’t even making it back for finals, suddenly they aren’t feared as one of the ‘fast kids,’ suddenly they are smaller and weaker and slower, and they feel like they are racing in a land of giants. This can be quite a come-uppance.

And it often leads to several negative results. Kids put things into cruise control, because they cannot visualize themselves being successful (where ‘being successful’ is defined as winning, placing top 3, finalling, etc.). With their reduced expectations, kids’ commitment changes: they stop working as hard, stop coming to practice as much, stop setting goals continually, stop coming to the meets that the coaches want them to compete in. Generally, they stop doing the things that made them successful before they aged up. They tell themselves, “It’s my bad year, and I’m not going to do well against the big kids anyway, so why bother? I’ll work hard again when I’m 12 (or 14), when it matters and when I’m one of the big kids.” Essentially, they lose a year of development, and improvement, and motivation, because they’ve decided beforehand that an entire year doesn’t matter.

Parents often collude in and support this attitude and behavior, for the sake of lessening the disappointment of losing. Talk of “bad year” abounds: you don’t have to go to practice, this is your bad year after all; why don’t you take up seventeen different sports, and next year you can concentrate on swimming again, when you’re at the top of your age group again; you don’t have to go to this meet, because you won’t be competitive anyway; you should stay home from JO’s or Far Westerns, because this is your bad year and you won’t be able to final against the fast kids anyway...

If the only point is to win, and if the pervading message is, if you can’t win then don’t try, then I suppose all this makes perfect sense and is a reasonable tack.

But, if the point is to get faster and to get better, a swimmer’s “bad year” is just as important as his “good year,” and the six months after a birthday are just as important as the six months before. Further, if placing and competition are important, and if you suddenly find yourself dropped way down the standings, you are not going to improve your position and get competitive again by taking the year off while other smarter, more clear-thinking kids get better.

One helpful means of getting over the age-up slump is to practice the “pre-emptive strike.” If you will be aging up mid-season or toward the season’s end, then look ahead. Pretend that you are already 11 (or 13), and judge your performances against the older age group’s standards. When you are at meets, check the results for the older age group: see where you would have finished, and see what it takes to win, to place top three, to final, to make top sixteen. Try to qualify for the major championships, whether JO’s or Far Westerns, for the older age group before you age up. Think like you have already had your birthday, and become accustomed beforehand to the increased expectations and higher standards. That way, you are continually looking forward and continually moving up the ladder.

Another way to slingshot your development is to have a proper understanding of expected progress. One year after aging up (e.g., on your twelfth birthday), I want you to have reached the same level or higher than you achieved in your previous age group, and in a broader range of events. In other words, if as a 10-year old you were AA level in your best stroke and A in others, then when you turn 11 I want you at least a AA in several strokes. If you can do this, and with good and consistent training you should be able to, then by the time you are at the end of your 12 year, you will probably be a AAAA swimmer. You will not only have gotten faster from 10 to 12, but you will have gotten better.

By setting proper expectations, and by steering your behavior by these expectations, you set yourself up to be a better and more versatile swimmer as you get older; you are not simply satisfied to reach the same level you reached before. Here, your “bad year” is instrumental in getting you back to your previous level, and your “good year” vaults you into the next universe of performance. «

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