

EU Swim Newsletter



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15 July 2008

Volume 1, Issue 2

This edition of the EU Swim Newsletter features articles from Belgium, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

From recent accomplishments at the Belgian championships to a swimming camp in Spain, we have compiled a selection that represents the experiences of clubs in Europe and America. A separate addendum to the Newsletter features York YMCA coach Michael Brooks' reflections on the US Olympic Trials, and can be found at euswim.org or by [clicking here](#).

The next edition of the Newsletter will be published on 15 August. Please submit your contributions for publication by this date to newsletter@euswim.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

*Julia Galan
Coordinator, EU Swimming Invitational*

Skalar Slupsk: Host Team 2008

*Jarek Madej
President, Skalar, Slupsk Poland*

This year's EU Swimming Invitational will be held in Slupsk Poland and will be organized by the Skalar Slupsk swimming club.

Skalar Slupsk, which is recognized by the Slupsk Town Council as a certified physical education club, formed in November 1994. It merged the strong swimming traditions of two clubs, AZS-WSP Slupsk and Marlin Slupsk. There are currently 55 swimmers affiliated with Skalar Slupsk, ranging from 9 to 16 years old.

Skalar's founder and head coach was Mr. Dariusz Gromulski. Under his direction, the team grew and many of his swimmers medaled consistently at the annual Polish Championships. One such notable swimmer was Beata Kaminska, European champion and



multiple record-holder in Poland.

Mr. Gromulski's departure made way for the arrival of new head coach Maciej Kowalewski. He has been training the Skalar Slupsk swimmers for two years, with tangible results. Six swimmers are on the District level in Poland and in June 2008, Alexander Blochowiak became Polish champion in the 100m backstroke.

Apart from the quality of its swimmers, Skalar Slupsk also organizes several important swimming competitions each year. Two such meets are "Slupsk: Amber Heart of Europe" and the "Independence Day Swimming Meeting". Both of these competitions attract approximately 300 to 400 swimmers from Poland and abroad. Skalar Slupsk are looking forward to organizing the 3rd edition of the EU Swimming Invitational, and are positive that their acquired experience will ensure a successful competition. «



Mirthe Goris and Joni Ceusters: Belgian Champions from Aarschotse Zwemclub Schoonhoven

*Pol Feyaerts
Sports Secretary, Coach
Aarschotse Zwemclub Schoonhoven, Aarschot, Belgium*

The Belgian Youth Championships, which recently took place in Brussels on the 10th-12th of May, brought the town of Aarschot and the AZS swimming club three Belgian titles, a feat that had not been seen for the past 20 years.

Mirthe Goris, 12, and Joni Ceusters, 11, proved themselves to be the fastest swimmers in their age group in three events, while also capturing medals in additional races. Mirthe, swimming for the girls "Benjamin" age group (11-12 years), won the 100m backstroke by several hundredths with a time of 1:12.05. The multi-talented swimmer also captured the bronze medal in the 100m butterfly and 100m freestyle events.

Joni Ceusters confirmed his dominance of the boys Benjamin age group in two events. Joni won the 100m freestyle with a 1:07.02, nearly 2 seconds faster than the runner-up, and also touched in first

for the 400m freestyle. Joni also brought home bronze medals in the 100m breaststroke and the 200m IM.

Also representing the AZS swimming club at the Championships were Jannes Wouters in the boys' Benjamin age group and Philippe Claes in the Cadets (15-16 years), who turned in good performances that placed them just after the medalists. Also achieving best performances were Rebecca Van Houtvinck, Emily Mattheus, and Sander Wouters. «



Pictured: Mirthe Goris and Joni Ceusters

Kingsbury Aquarius Swimming Club Visit Spain

Mark Jenkins

Press Officer

Kingsbury Aquarius Swimming Club, United Kingdom



This May, Kingsbury Aquarius Swimming Club members attended the magnificent Crol Leisure Complex with its 10 lane 50 metre heated outdoor pool for a week of intensive training.

On the first training session the weather was disappointing and it rained heavily followed by some fantastic thunderstorms. Following this unusual climate for the time of the year the weather changed and gave blue skies and bright sunshine for the rest of the trip.

Training sessions were held twice a day, one in the morning followed by a late afternoon session, and were attended by both junior and senior

swimmers. The pool and facilities provided at the Crol Complex gave the swimmers a fantastic opportunity to build up their stamina and they certainly made the most of this great training opportunity.

The hotel accommodation was excellent and the swimmers and parents were able to relax around the hotel pool or use the facilities of the heated indoor pool, jacuzzi and sauna.

Tuesday was a morning off and the more adventurous ventured into Barcelona to visit the Barcelona Football Club Camp Nou Stadium. Other free time was on Wednesday afternoon and a visit to the beach was in order for some very competitive games of volleyball and rounders between parents and swimmers. Great fun was had by all.

The week was a resounding success with the senior squad members completing approximately 40,000 metres of swimming over the week and the junior squad covering approximately 25,000 metres.

The swimmers who took up the challenge of the week were Perri Beattie, Cassie Bond, Tammy Bond, Courtni Foster, Tori Foster, Alison Gascoigne, Lauren Gascoigne, Gemma Green, Alex Jenkins, David Jenkins, Kelly McGurk, Liam McGurk, Alex Mears, Aimee Moulton, Jack Moulton, Brogan Oliver, Louis Oliver, Lauren Roe, Erin Strugnell and Jenny Tullett.

Special thanks goes to the Senior Coach Claire Brookes and Junior Coach Daniel Kirby and also to Darren Oliver for providing support to the coaches on poolside. Thanks also to the parents who spent many hours organising the trip and who went along to support the swimmers.

After such a successful trip Kingsbury Swimming Club is already looking at future opportunities for another training camp.

Check out the Kingsbury website at www.kingsburysc.co.uk. «

CUT ANXIETY

Michael Brooks

Head Coach

York YMCA, Pennsylvania (USA)

It is fairly common for swimmers to make good progress from level to level, then suddenly screech to a halt as they nudge up against a meet qualifying standard that they consider very important: a Y National cut, or JO cut, or Senior National, or Olympic Trials standard, or Grand Prix cut, etc. They want to go to this meet, it is important to them to compete there, so making the “cut” becomes important, sometimes all-important.

Every day in practice they repeat the mantra, “I must make the cut, I must make the cut.” At a meet, when the time to perform is come, the situation is even worse, and they spend their time before their events obsessing about the cut and focusing on the disastrous consequences of not making it. They set up this cut as the meaning of life, they imbue it with ritual powers, they decide that only making the cut makes them a worthy person and failing makes them unworthy. Instead of being excited and confident and ready to show what they have got, their bodies are wracked with anxiety and fear that paralyze the brain and body when they most want to perform well. When they stand behind the blocks, they look sick; when

they race, their strokes look off and their splits are all over the place; when they look up at the scoreboard after the race, they are dreadfully disappointed.

Ironically, this can happen despite stellar training performances. The better the training, the more likely that a swimmer is physically capable of reaching his goal, but also the greater the psychological pressure – or need – to reach it and the greater the anxiety: I MUST make it, I HAVE TO make it, I’ve been training so hard and so well!!! Instead of confidence that oils the wheels and helps the machine run at peak, their anxiety pours sand in the gears. Instead of the hum, we hear grinding and screeching.

Another irony is that this problem arises from a good and positive and necessary beginning. Excellence comes from high expectations, high standards, high aspirations. If you want to get good at anything, you need to set high goals, and you need to care deeply about making those goals. But goals are supposed to motivate you, to excite you about accomplishing something worthwhile – not to frighten you to death of failing. The problem here isn’t the goal, but what you are doing with it once it is inside your mind.

With most kids, focusing on making the cut – “I have to make the cut, I must make the cut, if I don’t make the cut I’ll turn into a giant cockroach like the guy in Kafka’s Metamorphosis” – doesn’t help. It takes your mind off what you

need to do, adds the element of fear, and raises the emotional ante much higher than most kids can handle. Your body works best when your mind is relaxed, confident, expecting good things, and “good nervous” – not scared out of your mind.

The race-saving trick is to change the focus. Great swims, goal-accomplishing swims, cut-making swims, are made up of parts: walls, stroke counts, stroke rates, proper technique, splits, pacing, etc. These parts are matter-of-fact, concrete, emotionally neutral, and they connect with your daily training.

Focus not on a time standard, nor on the consequences of failing to meet it, but rather on what you need to do. Use daily workouts to practice your races, to rehearse the parts of your races, to work on the simple cues to the point where they are habitual and require little thought. Then when you reach the meet, relax and let yourself swim fast. Relax, awash in the confidence that good training gives. And keep yourself calm, by focusing on what you need to do, the parts of the race you want to swim. It is amazing how many cuts are made when “making the cut” is the farthest thing from your mind. «

[Click here for Michael Brooks’ featured article Reflections on Olympic Trials.](#)

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