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The January edition of the EU Swim Newsletter presents a range of articles from teams in Belgium and the United States. We first introduce the Aarschotse Zwemclub Schoonhoven, hosts of the 2009 EU Swimming Invitational in Aarschot, Belgium. More information about the EU Swimming Invitational will be published shortly, so I encourage you to check the meet website at www.euswim.org.

We next present the York YMCA – team of Coach Michael Brooks, who is a regular contributor to the Newsletter. Finally, we present the Ecole Seraing Natation from Seraing, Belgium, and highlight some of their recent accomplishments.

Please do not hesitate to send in your articles by 15 February. I look forward to hearing from you and hope you enjoy this edition.

Julia Galan
Director, EU Swimming Invitational

Aarschotse Zwemclub Schoonhoven: EU Swimming Invitational 2009 Host Club

Pol Feyaerts
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Aarschot, Belgium

Aarschotse Zwemclub Schoonhoven was founded in October 1965 by brothers Jules and Louis Geeraerts and Louis Cortens.

First located on the “Schoonhoven” recreation field in Aarschot, the summer training – from May to October – was initially held in an open-air 50m pool, with winter training taking place in the nearby city of Leuven. Daems Frans was the first president of the club, Jules Geeraerts the first secretary and Jef Severens the first treasurer.

With an initial 8 members, the club joined the Royal Belgian swimming federation and the Rescue Federation in January 1966. A club emblem was designed by artist Miel Deca. It remains the symbol of AZS today.

In April 1980, the city of Aarschot opened a new 8-lane, 25m swimming pool, which allowed the club to expand and become competitive. Under the training of first coach Etienne Croes, a number of serious competitive swimmers developed. A swimming school was also formed.

After a setback with the pool’s closure in 1983, the club eventually developed into a professional league club, welcoming many new members, and organizing and participating in many provincial and national competitions. AZS has also traveled to several different countries for competitions and training camps. They have been to Hungary twelve times for training camps, and participated in the 2006 EU Swimming Invitational in Paris, and in Poland in 2008.

In January 2004, AZS’ headquarters was transferred to the city pool of Aarschot. The club currently has 280 members, 48 of whom are league swimmers, and has developed into a truly successful and forward-looking swimming team. «



York YMCA: The Taste of Success

It’s 4 PM on January 2. At the Graham Aquatic Center in York, Pennsylvania, the swimmers of the York YMCA prepare for their second practice of the day. Beethoven’s 5th Symphony plays over the speaker system. Head coach Michael Brooks and assistant coach Andy Stewart start the swimmers’ night off with a 20 to 25-minute warmup and the intensity begins.

Suddenly it is no longer the strains of classical music that we hear, but rather the upbeat tunes of Motown. The intensity begins, but the cheerfulness remains. Set after grueling set, the swimmers churn out fast-paced intervals without a word of complaint. The workout, however, has its own rhythm and meaning – it is not mindless swimming but rather a carefully crafted preparation striving to achieve an elite level.

Before the luxury of a 16-lane pool with a spectator capacity of 700, which opened this fall, the team was forced to pack into five narrow lanes, 10 swimmers per lane, sharing the pool with the general public. Against the odds, however, each day of preparation in harsh conditions paid off, allowing the York YMCA to establish a name for itself among the giants of USA Swimming.

Coach Brooks follows a three-pronged strategy for the success of his team. First, he

places an emphasis on teaching his swimmers to think like champions. Placing them in various test situations, such as giving a set that is a bit out of their comfort zone, and encouraging them along the way allows the swimmers

to realize the extent of their potential. The second prong of Coach Brooks’ strategy is an emphasis on stroke technique – ensuring that the swimmers will achieve maximum efficiency with minimum effort. Finally, emphasis is placed on preparing swimmers for racing conditions by hold-



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ing race pace and tempo during each practice.

This strategy has allowed the York Y to achieve great success at a very fast rate. As an example of the York Y's many accomplishments, Julia Kucherich participated in the U.S. Olympic Trials this past summer. She also qualified for the National Junior Team and will be representing the United States at an international competition in Canada this May.

Three swimmers (Chris Kramer, Julia Kucherich, and Noah Stewart) and the girl's 13-14 year old 800 freestyle relay (Sada Stewart, Taylor Brew, Caroline Bixler and Hali Flickinger) achieved USA Swimming Top Ten National Rankings.

Chris Kramer and Sada Stewart have also been selected to participate in USA Swimming's National Select Camp to be held in late January at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, CO.

And at the 13th Annual TYR Cup in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, the York YMCA was the overall combined team champion.

Congratulations to the York YMCA for their accomplishments, and looking forward to many more. «

High Accolades for ESN Seraing

Remy Crahay
Swimming Section
ESN Seraing, Belgium

The ESN Seraing swimming team has recently reported some excellent swimming accomplishments. As they await the reconstruction of their swimming facility, ESN Seraing has struggled to achieve top-quality swimming under tough conditions – and has succeeded admirably.

At the Belgian national championships in November, Thibault Emonds-Alt broke a Belgian national record in the men's 15 year 100m breaststroke with a time of 1:06.29.

Also in November, the women's 4x200 freestyle relay team (Julie De Coster, Fanny Giltay, Eloise Piron, and Jodie Lebrun) recently broke the Liège-Namur-Luxembourg district record.



Finally, Thibault Emonds-Alt and Julie De Coster were selected to participate in a three-week national training camp held in Mauritius this December. The prestigious camp included several elite athletes qualified for the junior and senior European Championships, as well as the up-coming World Championships.

Congratulations to ESN Seraing on their achievements! «

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