

## Coaches report

I would like to begin by thanking everyone for giving me such a nice welcome to the club, and to all the committee and volunteers that have helped me over the last couple of months. The start of this season has provided many unique challenges. The swimmers have had a lot of changes to deal with over the past few months, new coaching team, new squad structure, new pool hours. I have had the pleasure of coaching every squad in the club at some point over the past couple of months, and I believe they are all adapting to the changes very well.

Looking forward there are a lot of questions that we simply do not know yet, when will competitions return? When will we have a full programme? What will qualification look like for Counties, Regional or Nationals? However, this has not stopped me from setting out a clear path for the club, not only for this season, but for seasons to come. Normally I would share the season plan with swimmers and parents at the start of September, but with the uncertainty I decided to hold back on this initially. I will share with you today what my plans are moving forwards, both with competition and training.

With the new guidance potentially in place for 6 months, I do not envision any external competition until at least April 2021. We will hopefully run more in-house competitions between now and then, but the focus for all squads is getting the swimmers race ready for April / May.

As Head Coach my aim is for every swimmer to achieve their best performances at Hackney at 17/18 and have as many swimmers as possible continuing their swimming journey through university and beyond. Whether that be as a swimmer, coach, teacher or volunteer, and maybe even seeing some familiar faces return to our excellent master's squad. Everything we do as a club will be geared towards reaching potential in these senior years, and what we can do in their junior years to facilitate this.

I have a clear vision for each of the squads in our Age Group / Youth section, that has been welcomed by the coaches and implemented into their own squads. I will share with you the purpose of each squad so everyone can understand the direction the club is going.

### **Pathway 1: (AD1, AD2 and Bronze)**

Technical and Skilful – Swimmers in this part of the pathway will have a heavy focus on technique and skills work. At this age swimmers are most adapt to learning new techniques and improving in this area of their swimming. This part of the pathway is the foundation for a successful competitive swimmer. Whilst a technical and skills-based programme might not initially improve the swimmers as quickly as blasting them up and down the pool, it does give them a much higher potential in their youth / senior years. As the swimmer gets older, it becomes much easier to improve their physical attributes, and more challenging to make technical changes. So please do not worry if you feel your swimmer is not training hard enough in this part of the pathway, although their will still be some harder sessions throughout the season.

### **Pathway 2: (Regional Performance and Silver)**

Technical and Aerobic base – Whilst the technical aspect of training is still a high priority in RP and Silver, the swimmers will also be building their aerobic base which will set them up well for their progression into the youth squads. Swimmers in this section will be expected to compete in all different strokes and distances, and yes this includes 400 IM's and 1500's. Swimmer's will be learning how to train, and will be pushed a lot harder than they were in their previous squad whilst still being expected to hold skills throughout training and races. Swimmer's will be focussed on success at County and Regional level and the season plan will allow for good performances throughout the year. However, a successful swimmer from this part of the pathway would be a highly technical and skilful swimmer who can maintain these attributes throughout training and races.

### **Pathway 3: (National Performance and Gold)**

The focus of this pathway changes as the swimmer moves through. When a swimmer first moves to NP or Gold the focus will be on implementing the skills, they have learned in the previous squads into the new training schedule. Training in this stage will have more anaerobic, high intensity sessions and a swimmer must be able to maintain their skills whilst transitioning to these squads. The focus will also be on how to prepare both mentally and physically for competition, this is the stage where trying new training techniques, new ways to prepare, and doing a range of events is all encouraged. This can be a challenging time for a swimmer as PB's become harder to come by, but swimmers will be reassured that it is ok to fail and learn ways to bounce back stronger next time.

As the swimmer reaches 16+ the focus will be on performing at the major meets. Major meets are all relative to the individual swimmer, whether their major meet is counties or an international meet, the focus is on bringing out your best performances when it matters most to you. If the other stages of the pathway are all followed, they will be a skilful, technical and resilient swimmer who is in the best possible position to perform to their potential. The swimmer will specialise more on their best events, and their training will reflect this. I hope for as many swimmers as possible to reach their goals at this stage, whether that be qualifying for Regionals, or a spot on a British Junior team.

In this stage of the pathway, swimmers will have a multi-year plan focussed on what they need to do to achieve at 17/18 years old. Swimmers will have access to these plans in the near future, but as you can imagine I needed time to get to know the swimmers and they take a while to complete.

Ideally swimmers will only move between pathways at the end of each season, as I believe it is important to see out a coach's season plan. However, movements within a pathway (e.g. AD2 to AD1 – Silver to RP etc.) will be possible at any time.

### **Masters:**

It is very promising to hear updates of people wanting to join the master's squad at Hackney, and I hope we are not too far away from being able to facilitate this. I would like to thank all the master's for their understanding at this time as we try to get you some more ideal pool space. For those of you that I have coached over the past few weeks it has been

an enjoyable experience, and I know with Tony you have an excellent coach who you all appreciate.

### **Philosophy:**

I thought now was the perfect time to share with the club my coaching philosophy, which I like to think I hold myself to at all times. I have five major points that I follow as a coach.

**Honesty** – I feel this is hugely important in order to form a healthy relationship between swimmers, coach's, parents and committee members. If there is an issue it is always better to be honest about it and communicate with the people involved. An issue that is hidden away often becomes worse, and it can only be dealt with if it is communicated.

**Equality** – I believe Hackney already do an excellent job of providing training for swimmers of all abilities and backgrounds, and this is something that I want to continue and further improve on. Whilst as a person and coach I am extremely competitive and will strive for performance at the top level, I also love to see people enjoying swimming for the great sport it is. I think with the dedicated coaches on each of the squads, we will create a great training environment for all.

**Commitment** – I will be extremely committed to finding any detail possible to improve both a swimmer's performance and a swimmer's experience. Coaching is something I am extremely passionate about, and I hope this comes across in the delivery of my sessions.

**Education** – Swimming is a fast-moving sport, that constantly has new training techniques, styles and philosophies. I do not want to become a coach who is out of date with up to date practices and will always look for ways to educate myself and implement it into my training. My vision and philosophies may change through the years, but the aim will always be to get optimal performance out of the swimmers.

**Accountability** – When I review the season at the end of the year, there will always be things to improve on. I believe it is important for swimmers to have a coach who takes responsibility for the season, and who they can trust to provide the best quality training. If at the end of the season a swimmer can look a coach in the eye and honestly say that they gave everything to training but did not get the results they wanted, then I believe it is the coaches responsibility to find out why, come up with an action plan and take responsibility for bad results. Coaches can often be quick to take the credit for good performances, but then hide away when it doesn't go to plan which is generally when the swimmers need their coaches the most. Whilst it is impossible to guarantee good results all the time, I think it is important not to hide away when results go badly.

### **Final message:**

Looking through the club I can see many talented swimmers of all ages, and whilst we might lose a few of our successful seniors to university over the coming years I believe the future of Hackney Aquatics is bright. When events start back up again and we are back to some more regular training, I will be able to provide a more detailed performance plan for the

club. But for now, my advice will be to not look too much into the future but to focus on today, what can we do today to make ourselves more successful.

My final message is to the swimmers, and I ask that you pass this on to them.

‘Look after the person first, and the athlete will follow’

What I mean by this is don't get so tied up in your goal to become the best swimmer that you can be, that you don't let yourself do anything else. If that means going to a friend's house on a Friday after school one week instead of going training, then do it. If it means giving yourself an evening to yourself because exams and training are getting on top of you, then do it.

Whilst as a coach I want swimmers at as many sessions as possible, if you only focus on your 'athlete' side then eventually your results will suffer. If you give up everything else to become the best swimmer you can be, then eventually swimming will become the thing that stops you doing what you want to do, rather than being the thing you want to do the most. And because of this, your training and racing will eventually suffer.

If you focus on you as a person first, then your athlete side will come through and be more successful. You will enjoy swimming more; you will train better, and you will race faster. As I said before, I am an ambitious coach and I want to coach at the highest level I can so I would not give this advice if I thought it would in any way harm your swimming.

Being a swimmer is most likely an important part of your life, but it shouldn't be the only part. I am speaking from my own experience, as well as the experience of other swimmers I know, and it is something I believe is very important but not talked about enough.

I am looking forward to this season, and what is hopefully a long and successful time as Head Coach of Hackney.

Kind regards,

**David Broadbent**

**Head Coach**