

Tony Cronin joined Hackney Aquatics Club in 2009 as a junior swimmer at the age of 10. In 2016 he joined the Young Volunteer programme and from there progressed to become a full time swim coach. He has now risen to the positions of Assistant Head Coach, Lead Masters and Age Group coach.

Tony has coached non-competitive as well as competitive squads, from the very young academy swimmers to master swimmers. Over the years he has developed to become a highly respected, authoritative and professional coach.

What makes Tony so special is his personality; always in good humour, encouraging everyone at every level of swimming and despite his young age has a very impressive understanding of the challenges that some of our swimmers face at home or in school. This became very apparent during and after lockdown, which had a huge impact on the mental health of some of our swimmers. Tony has time for everyone.

He has a very fine understanding of what drives each individual; he can push a competitive swimmer to reach their full potential, knows how to build up confidence whether talking to an 8-year old competing for the first time, a teenager struggling with PBs or a mature masters swimmer. Tony is also a highly skilled technical coach having taught many youngsters to become technical competitive swimmers.

Tony loves to see swimmers grow and develop no matter which pathway they choose. His patience and calmness around the pool is very special and despite his relaxed demeanour he knows how to work the swimmers hard – in his own words; let the work do the talking. Six months ago he took over the Regional Performance squad and gained a very impressive result at the Counties and Regionals. This was tangible proof to himself and his swimmers of their hard work, self-belief and determination together.

The swimmers (and parents/carers) in the club have huge respect for Tony. This sentiment was expressed very well by a club member and National swimmer who left for university and wrote this note to Tony: *'Thank you for being my biggest role model and inspiration. Although I know it's a heavy burden to bear, it's been invaluable to have someone who I can kind of relate to give me advice. I hope you achieve everything you want to in life because you deserve it more than anyone I know. Thank you.'* J, 19

Growing up in Hackney Tony understands the diversity and challenges of the local community better than anyone. He's very proud that as one of the very few coaches of colour he can be a role model for the children he teaches. He's outspoken (having been featured on BBC news) and passionate about getting more swimmers from the underrepresented Black and Asian communities interested in competitive swimming.

Hackney Aquatics Club is an inner city East London Swim Club that prides itself on its strong community, welfare support and the diversity of its swimmers. The club serves some of the most deprived London boroughs and believes that every young person in East London should have an opportunity to swim. Tony embodies Hackney Aquatics Club and all its principles. He fully represents what a good professional swim coach should be and he's an inspiration and role model for black and minority swimmers. He deserves to shine.