

HEAD COACH'S REPORT – 2017/2018

Introduction

Although we have many fewer members than several of the other clubs in the county, Redditch Swimming Club continues to punch well above its weight in county, regional and national competitions.

The past year has been another very successful one for the club. Among the highlights were:

- PGL League champions 2017.
- 2nd in the medals table and numerous Junior and Open champions at the 2018 County Championships.
- 10 gold medals at the 2018 Regional Championships.
- Three medals for Lizzie Kingham, and several other finals for Lizzie and Amelia Rodd, at 2017 British Summer Nationals.
- Gold for Amelia Rodd at 2017 National Open Water Festival.
- Silver in the 200 fly for Paul Wilkes at the World Masters' Championships.
- County Founder's Prize for Paul Wilkes.

PGL League Final 2017

Towards the end of last season, in early June 2017, a team of relatively inexperienced 9 to 14 year-old swimmers travelled, probably in hope rather than expectation, to the GL1 Leisure Centre in Gloucester for the annual Ross PGL League Final – to take on the other seven teams placed in the upper section of the league, after four earlier rounds of competition. We had only won this competition once before, when we first joined the league in 2010, so the excitement level among our swimmers as we reached the last few events in first place was very high! I don't think that I have ever heard such a noise from our swimmers as when the youngsters realised that the trophy had been secured. It was great to see so many happy faces!

Summer Nationals 2017

The British Summer Championships and Swim England National Summer Meet at Ponds Forge, Sheffield in late July/early August, also proved to be very successful for our swimmers. Six Redditch swimmers had qualified for one or both competitions, and three returned with medals.

At the British Summer Championships, Issy Griffiths won gold in the 800 free in a time of 8:50.48. Issy also won silver in her age group (17/18 years) in the 400 free, came 7th in the final of the 200 free and finished 11th in the heats of the 200 fly. In the 15-year-old age group Lizzie Kingham won silver in the 50 and 100 breast, bronze in the 400 IM and also qualified for the finals of the 200 breast and 200 IM. In the same age group, Amelia Rodd reached finals of the 200 and 400 free, came 6th in the 800 free and 12th in the 100 free.

After just missing out on a medal in the 400 free, Amelia won gold at the National Open Water Festival, at Rother Valley Park, Sheffield - finishing 1st in the 3 km race (15 years age group).

The fourth Redditch Swimming Club qualifier at the British Summer Championships was Millie Checkley (13), who swam in the 400 IM.

Both Millie and Amelia returned to Sheffield the following week for the Swim England National Summer Meet. They were joined there by Emily Farr, competing at her first Nationals, and our boys' club captain, Paul Wilkes. Millie qualified for three finals, in the 100 breast, 200 breast and 200 IM. She also swam in the 400 free. Amelia, still recovering from a tough 3 km swim a few days earlier, swam in the 50 free. Emily swam superbly to gain a new PB in the 50 breast, narrowly missing the final. Paul, who was still preparing for his main target event of the season, the World Masters' Championships, finished 11th in the 200m fly – just 300ths of a second away from a place in the 18/over final.

FINA 2017 World Masters Championships

On 17th August, Paul represented Redditch at the 17th FINA World Masters' Championships in Budapest – finishing 6th in the 100 fly (30-34 years age group). Two days later he was back in action, in his main event, the 200 fly. A great swim was rewarded with a silver medal - to add to the two European golds that he had won in London the previous year.

Midland Winter Championships 2017

At the Midland Winter Championships in Nottingham, swum as a long course competition on this occasion, Redditch were represented by Amelia Rodd and Emily Farr.

Nuneaton & District Junior League 2017

The 2017/18 season also got off to a great start last September, with our younger swimmers competing at Wolverhampton in the Division 2 West Final of the Nuneaton and District Junior League. After three resounding victories in the previous rounds, which put us into the final as league leaders, our young swimmers did themselves and their club proud with another hugely impressive team performance. Despite being up against the next five best teams in the division, Redditch still achieved 31 1st place and 14 2nd place finishes in this 51 event gala – amassing a total of 269 points and giving us a 104 point winning margin over 2nd placed Bromsgrove. However, despite a written assurance that a win would gain us promotion back to Division 1, a subsequent decision at the league AGM to restructure the three divisions, promotion was denied us and we were placed into a new Division 2 for 2018.

Mercian League 2017

Redditch finished in a very respectable 10th place in the 2017 Mercian Summer League.

National Arena League 2017

Although the final league table has yet to be published on the league's website, it is thought that Redditch finished in 11th or 12th place – comfortably retaining our position in the West Midlands Premier Division of this important competition.

Winter Nationals 2017

Five RSC swimmers competed at this meet, which also served as the qualification competition for the Commonwealth Games. Amelia Rodd and Issy Griffiths represented Redditch, with Lizzie Kingham, Alisha Stephenson and Millie Checkley all swimming for City of Birmingham.

Worcester Winter League 2018

Once again, Redditch had two teams in the Worcester Winter League. The 'A final' was, as expected, dominated by Worcester, but a strong Redditch A team swam brilliantly to gain 2nd place in the gala and ensure 2nd place in the final league table.

Worcester County Championships 2018

A very successful RSC Club Championships and various open meets during the autumn and early winter period had increased the number of qualifiers for the 2018 County Championships to a much more than respectable number of 49. All except six of these competed at Wolverhampton in the championships and they returned with a magnificent 77 age group medals (31 gold, 28 silver and 18 bronze) – a total which again placed Redditch second in the overall medals table.

Perhaps even more impressively, Redditch swimmers won 18 trophies – 11 Senior (Open) Championship and seven Junior Championship winners.

British Championships 2018

In a very wintry week at the beginning of March, we had four Redditch swimmers competing at the 2018 British Championships in Edinburgh – Amelia Rodd (400, 800 and 1500 free), Lizzie Kingham (50, 100 and 200 breast, 200 and 400 IM), Alisha Stephenson (50, 100 and 200 fly, 100 and 200 breast) and Millie Checkley (200 breast). There were some excellent swims from all four girls.

West Midland Regional Championships 2018

This year we had a total of 24 qualifiers for the Regional Championships at Coventry, possibly another record for the club. Although three did not enter, of the 21 who did compete over the weekends of 28-29 April and 5-7 May, 16 represented Redditch (Anna Farr, Riley Perry, Ashleigh Green, George Hastings, Lucy Hatfield, Rosie Ward, Hannah Willis, Brendan Colley, Aurelio Lencioni, Emily Farr, Georgia Fisher, Megan Grainger, Lauren Hartland, Dan Holmes, Hollie Richmond and Amelia Rodd), 4 City of Birmingham (Amelia Wise, Millie Checkley, Lizzie Kingham and Alisha Stephenson) and one Ellesmere (Evie Floate).

Over the two weekends Redditch swimmers won 22 medals (10 gold, 7 silver and 5 bronze) there were gold medals for Amelia, Lizzie, Millie, Alisha, Emily and Aurelio and silver and/or bronze medals for Amelia, Lizzie, Aurelio, Ashleigh and Millie. There were also additional top six finishes in finals for Ashleigh, Alisha, Evie, Aurelio, Emily, Lizzie, Megan and, at her first regional championships, Lauren.

Summer Nationals 2018

I am delighted that no fewer than five Redditch swimmers have qualified for this year's British Summer Nationals in Sheffield – with an amazing 19 swims between them. Congratulations to Millie Checkley, Emily Farr, Lizzie Kingham, Amelia Rodd and Alisha Stephenson.

Other achievements

Among our swimmers' other achievements over the past year have been Amelia Rodd's selection for a West Midlands regional team competing in Amiens, France (January 2018), and her inclusion in the England Talent Phase 3 training programme, including an open water training camp and competition in Majorca (May/June 2018).

Six Redditch swimmers were selected for three 2018 County Development camps - Ashleigh Green, Anna Farr, George Hastings, Riley Perry, Elliot Wall and Amelia Wise; and 15 Redditch swimmers have been selected to represent Worcester County at the annual Three Counties gala later this month.

The Worcester County Founder's Prize, the County's "swimmer of the year award", was presented to Paul Wilkes, for a second time.

Thanks

Once again, I would like to publicly thank all of the coaching team – with particular mention of Adrian, Meg and Roy – who regularly give so much of their valuable time to provide the quality coaching that is so important to the club's continued success; our young coaches and poolside helpers who make an important contribution to the development of our swimmers; and also to Paul, Carol, Amanda and the many others who help to organise galas, sort competition entries and manage our teams.

Thanks also to the club's committee for their support throughout the past year and to the many other parents who have supported the coaching team and RSC in numerous ways.

Final Points and Conclusions

Despite our successes over the past 12 months, the next year will bring many new challenges. Maintaining our high standards and continuing to achieve success in the pool – and moving the club further forward – will largely depend on:

- Strengthening and restructuring the coaching team; after the loss of Megan, when she goes to university in September, and Adrian greatly reduces his hours later this year. We will also be losing Leah and Talia to university.
- Improving links with local schools and learn-to-swim schemes, to further improve the flow of talented swimmers into the Development squads.
- Maintaining and improving swimmer motivation, helping them to recognise the health and social benefits that continuation in the sport can bring and encouraging them to achieve personal targets – whether that might be to win a medal at the club championships or to achieve a first County qualifying time, or to compete in a National final or gain selection to represent Great Britain in international competition.
- Ensuring that the most talented swimmers, with the potential to progress to regional or national standards, are progressed towards and into the Performance squads without hindrance and, to assist this progression, the rules for the performance squads (e.g. 70% attendance rate at training) are tightened and more rigorously enforced.

Chris Britt

Head Coach, Redditch Swimming Club

5th June 2018