



Since arriving in the Wirral, I had intended to engage closely with the local clubs on Wirral but to date have had to allow my focus to be on the organisation and development of the high performance squad system. As I start my third year here, I fully realise that there is a need to further develop and expand the constructive relationship that the eight Wirral clubs began when they created Wirral Metro, but also to stop any mis-information being spread regarding the structure and content of the training programme of Wirral Metro. I also see this as a relationship that will change and advance to the benefit of all participating clubs and swimmers. Let me outline how I would like to see this being taken forward.

Since the appointment of British Swimming performance Director Bill Sweetenham, British Swimming has progressed rapidly in the last 4 years as a result of having an overall plan to ensure the best development opportunities for all swimmers following the Long Term Athlete Development Plan (LTAD). This is a structured programme that ensures from the moment a swimmer begins a swim programme; the child's long-term development will always remain the absolute priority. Each of Wirral Metro's squads and current coaches use the LTAD framework.

The LTAD is a programme, which is based on the principles of human growth and development. It is about achieving optimal training, competition and recovery in relation to the important growth and development years of young people. If a long-term approach to training is not adopted then neither are the opportunities for long term success made available to that swimmer. Swimmers not on a long-term programme are most likely to experience a plateau in performance when growth and development slow significantly (approximately 15-17 years for girls and 16-18 years for boys). For some swimmers this may result in performances getting worse and rewards for training being too little causing some swimmers to resent swimming or become negative towards training and/or competing. I am sure you will recognise this pattern within your experience in the clubs.

To simplify, if we do not apply the correct training at each developmental stage of a swimmers growth then they will lessen their chances of National & International success and this will have a detrimental effect on their chances of reaching their full potential. However if we do apply the correct training at each of the sensitive periods of growth, then the swimmers opportunity of reaching their full maximum potential is greatly increased. This is the aim of Wirral Metro and it's squads, the optimal achievement of performance for all swimmers it contains, with swimmer, coaches and clubs together, doing all within their power to attain the desired outcome of high level achievement for the swimmer.

This does not preclude the many swimmers within the feeder clubs of Wirral Metro enjoying the sport although not achieving the highest level of achievement. Indeed the expertise and knowledge contained within the Wirral Metro squads and club should help support the best possible training programme for the broad base of swimmers within those clubs that feed and support Wirral Metro.

I see the advantages of Wirral Metro and it's squads as follows, they are also its aims, objectives and principles:

- ◇ To set clear training standards and guidelines which will promote a suitable training environment in which swimmers can reach National and International levels
- ◇ To set clear and progressive squad qualifying times which coincide with the competition levels of each squad/LTAD competitive development phase
- ◇ To provide a smooth, safe and healthy progressive training environment/programme from squad to squad following the principles of British Swimming's LTAD (Long Term Athlete Development) plan.
- ◇ To provide an environment from which swimmers can realise their potential at high levels.
- ◇ To provide an environment where the best swimmers from all feeder clubs can train together to progress and motivate each other to higher levels.
- ◇ To provide coaching and facilities beyond the ability which the feeder clubs can offer.
- ◇ To provide a progressive programme enabling talented swimmers to achieve his/her potential within the sport of swimming.



- ◇ To provide positive encouragement and reward through awards and achievement within both training and competition
- ◇ To provide team building encouragement and exercises to generate an atmosphere which encourages sportsmanship and swimmers to support one another
- ◇ To become one of the leading performance swimming schemes in the North.
- ◇ To nurture and develop swimmers to National and International levels and to meet the criteria of British Swimming Programmes

The following are the overall benefits that should accrue from the above objectives:

Wirral Metro is an accredited training program fully supported by British Swimming.

Wirral Metro is developing full sports science support to be made available.

Wirral Metro has highly qualified coaching staff who are involved on British Swimming's world-class programmes.

Wirral Metro has only the concern of the individual swimmer development and do not have an income policy.

Wirral Metro works with and supports local coaches and local clubs raising the standard of swimming within the borough.

I realise that the final benefit above needs to be developed to support both our swimming programmes to their objectives and this letter is the start of that process. Please arrange to discuss how you feel Metro can support your swimmers within your committees and be prepared to send representatives to a meeting in the New Year, I will advise of the date in January or February. At this meeting we will further describe how we intend to organise Wirral Metro, Wirral Squads, swimming structure on the Wirral and how we can help in supporting the swimming programme within the clubs on Wirral.

I have consulted all of these issues with Fred Kirby (British swimming coaching coordinator, for the north of England), who has been involved with overseeing the Wirral Metro training programme for British Swimming.

We both are in complete agreement that the philosophy of the Wirral Metro training program is in the best interest in the development for all levels of swimming.

Best Regards

Martyn Robinson
Chief Coach
Wirral Metro