

## **Stretford ASC AGM – Report from the Head Coach**

During 2019 my aim was to make gradual changes to the training program, with a clear transition to a more focused, progressive approach for the new season starting in September. The swimmers stepped up to the mark and it is fantastic to see a huge majority of swimmers completing the entirety of each session. Our weekly mileage increased from around 21K to 23-25K from September. This set us up brilliantly for some of the successes at the tail end of the year, with Arena League being the biggest of those.

Throughout the year we attended many open meets including at Darwen, Salford and Manchester. Our swimmers put their training into practice and performed well through the year, achieving many qualifying times for various higher level competitions. This year we had 19 club-trained qualifiers who could have raced at Lancs County champs, with many qualifying in multiple events. At Lancs, we finished with 2 Gold and 1 Bronze medal and a total of 18 top-8 finishes (up from 16 last year) – a great achievement from our swimmers! We also made numerous finals at North West Regionals, with swimmers showing great progression from Counties. There was a host of medals at both Counties and Regionals from our COMAST members, winning numerous events and continuing their progress from last year. Pointscore winners Chloe Scott and Jack Webb showed remarkable consistency throughout the year to finish ahead of the chasing pack.

This year, Jared has fully bedded in and has worked very hard pushing the intermediate group, and has greatly contributed to the improvements of a large number of swimmers through the year. We also said goodbye to Rory and Molly as they headed off to university. Our group structure, whilst remaining the same, saw a large number of promotions through 2019. Many swimmers showed maturity and determination in setting a goal to move up, finding out how to do so and putting it into practice. Indeed some of these swimmers have progressed onto poolside, coaching the younger swimmers and passing on their knowledge. Many thanks to Izzy, Alfie, Anna, Scarlett, Bethan, Nina, Ellie, Abbie, Noah, Luqa, Harriet and Erin who have coached alongside Jared, Alasdair, Shelley, Phil and myself this year.

We competed in a number of team galas, including various M&D leagues, Central Lancs Intermediate, Trafford Borough Development galas and Arena League. Highlights from these included a 3rd place overall finish in the M&D Prog B Final with our male swimmers again given medals for being the top male team overall (equaling the performance from 2018). Our Central Lancs performances were also nicely improved from 2018 – gaining significantly better results against the same strong teams as last year. In the National Arena Swimming League we came off the back of two consecutive promotions, back in the premier division for the first time since the early 2000s. Our performances were fantastic in the first two galas, being ranked 10<sup>th</sup> overall from 16 in the North West. Then came the B-final, starting 2<sup>nd</sup> on paper, sandwiched between Wrexham and Trafford Metro, we pulled off a barnstorming performance to WIN the B-final gala, just ahead of our local rivals!

At our main target meet for the year, Club Championships, our swimmers set an astounding 26 new championship records, including some which had stood for many years. There were 27 different champions and a total of 46 different swimmers winning at least 1 medal over the three days. We also ran a full distance champs including 800/1500 Free and 400 IM for the first time on our own, with great participation from our swimmers. As always, a massive thank you to the many volunteers who officiated and helped out over the event.

We returned to Rossall for Swim Camp 2019 and had a great time. We had a number of new parents stepping up as staff members which greatly helped the success of the camp. As always the atmosphere at the Thursday night competition was electric. The competitive spirit amongst everyone was fantastic to be a part of. The swimmers even faced off against the coaches in a relay! The gala included a large number of PBs showing the swimmers' hard work through the week was paying off.

There has been a huge amount of hard work put in from the coaches, officials, volunteers and committee members this year and it has all added up to these amazing successes. I'd particularly like to thank our growing number of volunteer coaches of all ages who work alongside me on a weekly basis.

Tom Pope  
Head Coach