



Gloucester Masters Swim Club Coaching Report 2023

In my 8th year as Head Coach I can report "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" in what can only be described as roller-coaster year for the Club. Despite losing our main training base at GL1 in September, Club swimmers still managed to finish the year with 10 British Champions, 7 English Champions, 6 European Masters Games Champions and in addition Club swimmers established 2 European records, 16 British records, 21 Welsh records and an amazing 94 Regional records in all competitions. As a Coach it is particularly pleasing to see records being set by males and females, in multiple age groups, strokes and distances.

Competition Highlights:

I would like to name all swimmers who competed in all events this season, however, with so many great results it is not possible in this report.

The first Long Course competition of the year was the annual Swim Wales (50m) Welsh Masters Meet in Swansea on the weekend of the 4th and 5th March. **Don Leatherbarrow** (85-89yrs) was in amazing form winning 6 Gold medals and breaking 6 British and Regional records in the 1500m Free 29:40.04, 800m Free 15:42.52, 400m IM 9:06.39, 200m IM 4:07.73, 100m Butterfly 2:16.52 and the 50m Butterfly 53.49. The 1500m Free was also a European record by some 3 minutes !!!! Newly aged-up **Nia Westlake** (30-34yrs) won 4 Golds and 2 Silvers and set 3 Welsh records in the 400m IM 5:33.79, 200m IM 2:34.71, 200m Backstroke 2:44.10 and 4 regional records in the 200m butterfly 2:41.45, 200m Breaststroke 3:02.63 and the previously mentioned IM's and Backstroke events. **Michaela Morris** (60-64yrs) won 5 Golds and set 3 Welsh records in the 50m 41.61, 100m 1:31.37 and 200m 3:16.42 Backstroke events and **Alex Morris** (20-24yrs) kept it a family affair by winning Gold and setting a Welsh record in the 50m Butterfly 26.21. **Simon Wintle** (55-59yrs) won 3 Golds and set 3 Regional records in the 200m 2:34.26, 100m 1:09.55 and 50m 31.71 Backstroke. **Matt Bailey** (50-54yrs) set Regional records in the 100m Butterfly 1:09.66 and 200m Free 2:22.11 and **Vicky Payne** won 3 Golds and set a new regional record in the 50m Breaststroke 37.85. **Bethan Bell** (50-54yrs) also had some great swims and set 2 new Regional records in the 100m 1:18.96 and 200m Backstrokes 2:49.30.

Eight Club swimmers made the short trip to Birmingham and the records continued to fall Saturday 13th May at University Pool. **Don Leatherbarrow** was again in scintillating form breaking another 3 British and Regional records in the 200m Free 3:17.10, 50m Butterfly 51.90 and the 50m Free 37.47. Newly aged-up **Colin Stephenson (65-69yrs)** was also in great form breaking 2 British and Regional records in the 200m Free 2:18.39 and the 100m Free 1:01.42 and a Regional record in the 50m Free 27.83. **Simon Wintle** also improved his times and set 2 Regional records in the 200m Backstroke 2:26.43 and the 100m Backstroke 1:05.65. In total we finished the day with 16 Golds, 3 Silvers and 3 Bronzes.

This years British Masters Championships (50m) were once again held in Sheffield on the 2-4th June and proved to be one of our Club's most successful Championships in recent years with 14 Club swimmers completing 79 swims and winning 19 Gold, 15 Silver and 8 Bronze medals and finishing 7th Best Club Overall. **Colin Stephenson** led the way with a win and a European and British record in the 100m Free 1:02.72. In addition, Colin won Golds and set Regional records in the 200m Free 2:25.09, 400m Free 5:15.52 and won Silver and also set a Regional record in the 50m Free 28.34. **Simon Wintle's** hard work in the pool and in the gym paid off as he had a great weekend winning Gold and setting his first British record in the 200m IM 2:29.48. Simon also won Golds in the 100m and 200m Backstroke, 1:08.84 and 2:31.86 and won Silver in the 50m Backstroke in 31.36, all times were new Regional records. **Nia Westlake** won 4 Golds and set Welsh and Regional records in the 400m IM 5:24.60, 200m IM 3:32.95, 200m Breaststroke 2:57.77 and a Welsh record in the 200m Free 200m Free 2:18.24. **Michaela Morris** also set Welsh records in the 50m 42.15, 100m 1:31.12 and 200m Backstroke 3:27.01. **Jess Partridge** (45-49yrs) won 3 Golds in the 400m IM 5:43.48, 200m Butterfly 2:43.53 and 200m IM 2:45.64 the first 2 times setting new regional records. **Matt Bailey** won 2 Golds in the 50m 30.81 and 100m 1:09.45 Backstroke and 2 Silvers in the 50m 29.01 and 100m 1:05.27 Butterfly with all swims except the 50m Backstroke setting new Regional records. **Tony Cherrington** (80-84yrs) also won Golds in the 50m 36.59 and 400m 7:23.09 and Silvers in the 100m 1:28.05 and 200m 3:31.05 Free events. Our relay teams also produced 2 Gold, 3 Silver and 2 Bronze Medals. Highlights being the wins in the Mixed 200yrs+ 4x50m Free Team of Colin

Stephenson, **Jo Duberley**, **John Anderson** and Michaela Morris and the Men's 200yrs+ 800m Free Relay of **Matt Bailey**, **Luke Pearson**, Colin Stephenson and Simon Wintle.

The European Masters Games took place in Finland from 7th -9th July and 9 Club swimmers made the journey. **Jess Partridge** and **Jayne Stephenson** led the Team with 4 Golds each, **Colin Stephenson** and **Kate Nimmo** won 3 Golds each and **Sandy Jones** and **Tony Cherrington** each won 2 Golds.

On the world scene the biggest event of the year was the World Aquatic Masters Championships on the Island of Kyushu, Japan from 2-11th August. **Colin** and **Jayne Stephenson** and **Tony Cherrington** were the only Club swimmers to make the 12,000 mile round trip to Japan. Tony led the way with Silvers in the 3K Open Water, 200m Free 3:18.15 and 400m Free 7:30.92. Jayne was not far behind with Silvers in the 800m Free 12:44.38 and 200m Free 2:51.78 and Bronze in the 400m Free 6:07.96. Colin also won Silvers in the 400m Free 5:14.78 and 100m Free 1:03.09 just 0.37 outside his European record from June and also set a new regional record in the 50m Free 28.29 where he finished 4th.

This years Swim England Masters National Championships were held yet again at Sheffield and we had 16 Club swimmers competing in 84 swims and winning 15 Golds, 10 Silver and 4 Bronzes. **Tony Cherrington** won 4 Golds in the 50m, 100m, 200m and 400m Freestyle and **Jess Partridge** also won 4 Four Golds in the 800m Free, 400m Free, 400m IM, 200m Butterfly and won a Bronze in the 200m IM. **Kate Nimmo** (45-49yrs) won Gold in the 50m Backstroke and our Female 800m Freestyle Relay of **Jayne Stephenson**, **Sandy Jones**, **Jess Partridge** and **Nia Westlake** also won Gold. **Colin Stephenson** continued his great year by winning Gold in the 100m Freestyle and setting another British and Regional record with 1:00.90. Colin also won Gold in the 400m 5:02.52, 200m 2:18.56 and Silver in the 50m 27.65 Freestyle, the 400m and 50m times set new Regional records. All rounder **Nia Westlake** had the usual busy weekend winning 2 Golds and 3 Bronzes and setting new Welsh records in the 400m IM 5:16.37, 200m IM 2:34.40 and 200m Backstroke 2:33.36. Those times were also new Regional records and Nia also broke regional records in the 200m Butterfly 2:37.38, 100m IM 1:10.52 and 200m Breaststroke 2:54.22. Jayne Stephenson won 3 Silvers and a Bronze in her freestyle events, Tom Morrow (65-69yrs) won a Silver and a Bronze in his Breaststroke events, **Vicki Payne** (30-34yrs) won a Silver in the 100m Breaststroke and Club stalwart **Nick McDowall** (70-74yrs) also won a Bronze in the 50m Breaststroke. **Matt Bailey** won a Silver in the 50m Backstroke and also established Regional records in the 50m Butterfly 28.66, 100m Butterfly 1:04.18, and 50m Backstroke 30.07. Our Female 160yrs+ 400m Medley Relay of **Kate Nimmo**, **Vicki Payne**, **Sandy Jones** and **Nia Westlake** also won a Silver medal.

The annual National Masters Inter-County South West regional meet took place on 12th November at Millfield (25m) and was as fun and competitive as ever with many best times swam and GMSC accounting for 28 of the 41 swimmers on the Team. Individual Club winners on the day were **Tom Morrow**, **Sandy Jones**, **Matt Bailey**, **Simon Wintle**, **Colin Stephenson**, **Theo Cannon**, **Vicki Payne**, **Megan Hartery**, **Jayne Stephenson**, **Ceris McKearney**, **Gill Ferris**, **Pete Smith** and **Tony Cherrington**. Simon had 3 wins in the 55yrs + and set new Regional records in the 50m Butterfly 29.01 and 50m Breaststroke 33.20. Rookie Theo won the 18yrs+ 50m Freestyle in 23.14 also a Regional record and Colin won the 65yrs + 50m Freestyle in 27.45 also a Regional record. On the day Gloucestershire again came up short with 1657 points to Devon's 1700 points. Once the National virtual Meet was run Colin Stephenson was our Clubs lone National winner in the. Overall the Team scored 1546.50 points to finish a creditable 6th place, up 3 places from last years 9th place finish. Hampshire were crowned National Champions with 1729 points. I would like to thank Team Manager **Brian Armstrong**, Coach **Tom Howells** and Senior Nurse **Mary Davies** who helped out on the day and definitely contributed to the Teams success.

Training Review:

From January to September our regular training sessions at GL1 were Sundays 1:15-2:30pm, Tuesdays 8:30-9:45pm and Thursdays 8:00-9:15pm. We did miss several sessions during the year to pool floor problems at GL1 and unfortunately, our Open Meet scheduled for April was also cancelled only 2 days before the event. Regrettably several swimmers and Clubs from around the country lost money on Hotel rooms but Colin Stephenson did spend many hours refunding entry fees to ensure competitors did not loose all. We do plan to host an Open Meet in May 2024 assuming all the equipment at GL1 is in working order and as usual all club members will be expected to either compete or help out on the day.

Our usual Summer Saturday Lido sessions started on 1st April and as always it was great to swim outside in a 50m pool. Again we only hired half the pool which I feel did not negatively affect our sessions in anyway. Our last session at the Lido was on 23rd September, and Penny and Jo organised a great end of season picnic which was blessed with sun all day. As always a big thank you to the Trustees and Staff at the Lido for making us feel very welcome and we look forward to returning to the Lido next year at the later date of May 2024.

Obviously we were all shocked and disappointed on Thursday 28th September when after 15yrs in charge Aspire Trust decided to wind up the Charity and leave GL1 closed indefinitely. After much searching we were very lucky to pick up replacement get sessions on Fridays and Sundays at Cheltenham College and Tuesdays and Thursdays at Brockworth School and we thank the management teams of those pools for their help at that time. However, the pool hire costs for those replacement sessions proved to be more expensive than GL1 and low overall attendance figures meant the Club lost money at all sessions. I would also like to thank local clubs Cinderford SC, Stroud SC, Cheltenham SWPC and Bristol Penguin SC who offered our swimmers the opportunity to train with them during this time.

At the time of writing this report we were scheduled to be back training at GL1 on 5th December 2023.

2023 Award Winners:

It gives me great pleasure to announce this year's Club award winners:

- **GMSC Male Swimmer of the Year** – Colin Stephenson – Colin joined the Club in 1996 and had a great year with 8 National titles, 2 European records, 4 British records and 11 Regional records. In addition, Colin has worked tirelessly as Club Membership Secretary and as usual has taken on various other jobs to help the Club during the year. Colin last won the award in 2010.
- **GMSC Female Swimmer of the Year** – Jo Duberley – Jo also joined the Club in 1996, and apart from a break to have children, she has been an enthusiastic swimmer, competitor and club member during that time and is currently our Club joint Social Secretary. Jo became a British Champion this Summer for the first time in her career in the Mixed 200m Freestyle Team 200yrs + Age Group at British Championships and she also finished 5th in the 50-54yrs 50m Freestyle. Jo has represented the County many times during her career and swam a fantastic 29.91 50m Freestyle at the 2023 National Masters Inter-County event at Millfield. This is the first time Jo has won the award
- **GMSC Improver of the Year** – James Lamb – James joined the Club in 2022 and has been a regular swimmer at training and competitions during that time. Over the last year James improved his 200m Freestyle by some 6 seconds and his 100m Free by some 4 seconds and has also competed in 100m, 200m and 400m IM events for the first time. James also won 1 Gold, 5 Silver and 1 Bronze at the Euro Games in Bern, Switzerland this Summer.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Coaches **Craig Skinner** and **Morgan Davies** who coached regularly at sessions during the year. Especially those sessions during our GL1 closure and I am sure we can all agree their efforts and youthfulness definitely added to our training experience.

As always, I would also like to thank all our Committee members for meeting regularly throughout the year and taking the many actions necessary to ensure the Clubs smooth running. Special thanks to Club Secretary **Tony Coleby**, Membership Secretary **Colin Stephenson**, Fixtures Secretary and Swim England South West President **Brian Armstrong** and Social Secretaries **Penny Hickson** and **Jo Duberley** who organised various events during the year. I would also like to thank Club Treasurer **Kieran Vickers** who did a great job paying bills and keeping our finances in check during the year. Unfortunately, Kieran is unable to continue in the role but we thank him for his efforts over the last few years.

Finally, it is with great sadness that I report the passing of **Carole Newman** on 24th May 2023. Carol joined the Club in 1993 and was a well liked and loyal club member during her time. Carole won our General Portfolio Improvers Perpetual Cup in 2001 and she first started swimming with us at our Wednesday evening stroke improvement session whilst her daughter Emma was training with Gloucester City Swim Club in the No. 2 (Twyver) pool. Carol went on to become a successful competitive swimmer and enjoyed the club's annual training camps at Club La Santa in Lanzarote. Her daughter Emma (now Emma Richards) is know by many current Club members and was a club member from the early 2000s for several years.

Simon K. Cooper,
Head Coach GMSC,
November 2023