



HADEN HILL SWIMMING CLUB

(Affiliated to ASA and ASA West Midland Region and WCSA)

Special Newsletter – The Diddy 'B's

This is a newsletter with a difference – in essence it's a gala report but it's written from the perspective of a parent, a pool side chaperone and a member of the committee.

Having personally had 2 weeks away from the club I arrived last Thursday night to see that my son was on the Diddy 'B' league team sheet for the gala at the Pingles – I ticked his name to add to the 5 ticks already there but as a parent my 'heart fell into my shoes' noting the number of swimming places we couldn't even put a name to, due to the shortage of 11 and 12 year olds, as well as the lack of listed swimmers that had confirmed their attendance.

I also listened to the concerns of other parents and as a committee member I resolved to bring it up at the committee that we needed to double think our participation next year due to the lack of numbers and a seemingly lack of interest.

This resolution was hard for me because as an experienced swimmer parent I personally think that the Diddy league is one of the best leagues to start out in for competitive swimming – there is a wide breadth of swimmer talent and with the sheer willpower of parents and swimmers alike, every swim, fast or slow, is recognised as an achiever!

By the end of Thursday night the 'B' list of confirmed attendees increased to 12 confirmed swimmers – for the Diddy league this is less than ½ a team and down on the 16 swimmers that took part in round 1! I must admit I was looking forward to Saturday with a sense of trepidation!

Saturday came and after a few phone calls from Neil we had 16 swimmers on poolside – at least we had made the numbers for half a squad!

Now as a parent I can imagine the concerns and the comments from the viewing gallery, I know I've been there – "we haven't got enough swimmers", "we haven't got a chance", "why are we here?"

But as a parent I've had the privilege (and yes, it is a privilege!) of being chaperone to the kids on poolside, I've been able to share in their experience of the 2 rounds of this league and I think it's worth sharing with you my experience of the last 2 rounds as it may answer these questions!

Our first priority was to ensure that the kids realised that we wouldn't win, we were there to do our best but to place the emphasis on gala experience and the opportunity to gain new "Personal Bests" as well as the chance to experience the full breadth of the different strokes in a racing environment. Additionally to minimise the number of races we couldn't enter, many swimmers were going to have to "swim up" (this is swimming in an age range higher than their own) - any decision to "swim up" is a careful balance of managing

expectations of the swimmer and the decision to swim someone or lose points - we need to ensure that these kids enjoy the experience and don't get disheartened at their own performance.

However one thing perhaps we did underestimate was the determination of the kids to win!

This is what I see on poolside:-

These kids are bonding as a team, the team spirit is inspirational!

They may be nervous but their enjoyment and growing confidence is very evident – our little 'darlings' are more independent than we think!

Their will to win is evident – Even at their tender years they are challenging Neil on the choice of swims suggesting changes where they think a better result could be achieved!

They are volunteering for "swim ups" that have been left blank knowing that an additional point could be gained (and by the way doing it and not coming last!)

Occasionally they may come 6th, especially in an older age group swim, but every time they come out from that pool they come out with a big grin on their face, evidently recognising their own achievement and their contribution - another point achieved!

We had one upset on Saturday - not because the swimmer had lost - but because they felt they had made a mistake which in the swimmer's own words – let down the team! This is a hard one for chaperones and it's important to help the swimmer to put it in to context and move on - we all make mistakes! One mistake was nothing in comparison to the overall effort that swimmer had put in that night.

I have to say these kids are a great bunch of kids; their poolside discipline is a credit to them, their enthusiasm is fantastic and their will to succeed is phenomenal – **if you are a parent of one of them give them a big hug and congratulate them on my behalf** and then pat yourself on the back for a job well done. Take pride in their achievement and their determination - whatever their race position - and don't be too dismayed when they swim up – they may have asked for the swim!

Finally – we came 5th in Saturday's gala, this is a fantastic result - let me put this into context – we couldn't swim in 11 out of a total of 51 possible races (that's a loss of up to 66 points before we start!), there were at least another 4 swims where an older swimmer participated to enable the younger ones to experience their relay races – this is another potential loss of 24 points – Most of the 11 & 12 year old relays we swam were supplemented by our 9 & 10 year olds indeed the boys freestyle cannon was almost all 9 & 10 year olds but we still managed to come third due to sheer determination!

So as a committee member and my previous resolution I must say I've changed my mind - I can't deny these swimmers and others like them the chance to swim, the chance to bond the way they have and the sheer enjoyment they have gained from their participation so rather than recommend that we don't enter two teams I for one, along with the rest of the committee will be working to retain swimmers within the club and to encourage parents to let their swimmers participate so that numbers for 2 teams become sustainable and, to this end, I will add, that if you are a parent of a potential B team swimmer that hasn't swum yet – think about it, be guided by Neil or your coach - and don't be put off due to

the lack of numbers on the list, think of your little swimmer and what they gain from it – they really do enjoy it!

I would ask that everybody examines the board on a regular basis and if a team list is put up please confirm your attendance as soon as possible or cross out your name if you can't attend, this will give us more time to consider the races and who swims in which ones. Remember - if you are the parent of a swimmer in the competitive development group or either of the 2 squads there is an expectation that swimmers will participate in galas – that's what they are training for so think hard before crossing them out!

Indeed unless we all pull together to put out a team we'll never achieve a full second team, we have more younger swimmers coming on board all the time and year on year we should be able to increase the 2nd team size to maximum capacity, in the mean time the effort of our swimmers can not be denied and they are a credit to their parents and their coaches!

I would add that if you have any concerns about anything, please discuss them with a member of the coaching team or the committee and give us the chance to address any concerns!

Finally as a club we run only due to the hard work of volunteers – if you want to experience what I was privileged to experience let me know and we'll get you signed up and trained to help out where you can - we always needs extra helpers!

Well Done to the Diddy 'B's

Frances	Ethan	Richard	Amy	Jessica	Lucy	Craig
Nathan	Josh	Chloe	Lucy	Kieran	Lauren	Jonathan
Ashley	Hannah					

Regards – Sue Hazell – B Team Chaperone & Club Secretary