

Report to Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire ASA Management Board, Tuesday 9 June 2020

Aquatic Discipline: Diving

Programme

There remain just two ASA Diving Clubs within the county boundaries:

- Amersham Diving Club who are part of Amersham Swimming Club and are based at Everyone Active operated Chiltern Pools in Amersham
- Albatross Diving Club who, since the closure of Central Pool in Reading now operate primarily out of The Abbey School, but also use other pools including Amersham.

Albatross is a SwimMark accredited club with reaccreditation submitted to the next SwimMark Board. Amersham Diving Club are part of Amersham Swimming Club so will be reaccredited with their submission.

Amersham run a primarily skills (novice) level competitive programme and have a flourishing Masters section. In addition to Skills, Albatross also have Age Group, Elite and Senior divers competing at national level and a growing Masters programme.

Programme	Amersham	Albatross
Learn to Dive	74	40
Pre-Skills/ Novice Divers	21	15
Age Group Divers	0	6
Elite Divers	0	3
Senior Divers		4
Masters/ Adult Diving	13	4
Level 2 Coaches	4	7
Level 1 Coaches	0	7
Young Leaders	0	2

Competitive Calendar

Clearly due to the Covid-19 crisis the competitive calendar for 2020 has been disrupted, but since the last report there has been several open competitions at all levels. At Novice level Albatross had success at the Gavin Brown Love to Dive competition in February with 3 gold, 1 silver and 3 bronze medals and Amersham 2 gold medals at the Surrey Skills event in January. At Age Group, Elite and Senior medals on all 3 podiums were secured in both Southampton and Plymouth by divers competing from Albatross.

National events with divers from Albatross were the National Age Groups in Sheffield last July with the county represented by 7 divers including Edward Beal who won gold medals on all 3 boards. The Scottish Nationals held in Edinburgh in December with the county represented by 4 divers and returning with a silver and bronze medal, the English Schools Diving Championships at London Stratford, again in December, with the county represented by 3 divers in the Southeast Divisional Schools Team and the British National Diving Championships that managed to squeeze in in January before pools were closed.

This latter senior event, held in Plymouth, saw 2 Albatross divers representing Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire, compete against the top divers in the country. It is thanks in no small part to Amersham for their support in allowing pool training time, that one of the Albatross boys ranked 5th junior on the 3m springboard at this competition. It is both a massive achievement to be eligible to compete at this event and an honour to be amongst such a talented group of dedicated sportsmen and women, some of whom were using the event as part of their Olympic selection campaign. Just the fact that the divers reached the qualification scores puts them in within the top 12 of their age band and is testament to the dedication and focus given by the team of diver, parents, and coaches. The event is screened live on YouTube and watched not only by the whole diving community but also by many young aspiring divers who see the sport in action and join the club waiting lists. The 2 divers representing the county have risen steadily through the age and competitive levels to reach this point with 2 more years remaining as juniors. I make no apology for repeating my words from last year that the respect afforded Albatross club and its divers across the country is tangible; diving is a sport which crosses club boundaries in the divers and coach support for one another, something that remains hugely beneficial in Albatrosses search for pool space during this period before the new pool opens.

Administration & Coaching

Both clubs remain committed to supporting past divers who wish to remain in the sport. Amersham has a thriving Masters section diving at National, International and World events and Albatross now have 4 Masters divers with 2 winning gold and silver in the Novice Women's category of the Winter Masters in Southend in November. Over the past few years 4 divers from Albatross have taken the opportunity of full scholarships to universities in America. 3 have now graduated, but one of these is returning to take a master's degree course whilst coaching the university dive team in Kentucky alongside pursuing a high diving stunt career. This university opportunity affords the diver both a chance to carry on in their chosen sport whilst studying and the gaining of a debt free degree, something the UK cannot yet match.

Albatross have part funded (along with utilising SE Regional bursaries) 3 divers achieve their Assistant Coach (old Level 1) qualification this year and a further ex diver his Diving Coach (old Level 2) qualification. A further diver will be utilising the new virtual learning course offered by Swim England to gain the theory element of his Assistant Coach qualification this month with the practical being completed once pools reopen. Albatross currently has a further 2 Assistant Coaches looking to gain their Diving Coach qualification and are in contact with the Institute of Swimming to see whether there may be a possibility of following the same idea as the Assistant Coach course to complete the theory element of this qualification online and the practical once pools reopen. Both clubs operate a Young Leaders scheme which encourages divers to assist qualified coaches from age 14 to maintain low coach to diver ratios. These Young Leaders are then encouraged to complete the Assistant Coach qualification at 16. Those Albatross coaches with Safeguarding training renewals this year have all completed the virtual course available during lockdown and the club are currently renewing the theory element of their life saving certificates.

SwimMark support Albatross in its operation and, during 2019, it was again recognised by Swim England as a Diving Development Centre (DDC) with funding offered to build sustainable, competitive, clubs for the future of the sport. Both county clubs are non-selective in their Learn to Dive programmes with Amersham offering local competitions for whole club participation. Both clubs are looking for their new pools to grow the clubs further and introduce Talent Identification progression (TID).

Both Amersham and Albatross have divers involved with the SE Region ACE Diving Network and the SEEDS Talent Scheme. Amersham continue to have difficulty in resourcing regional camps with coaches when there are clashes with the home programme. Albatross utilises CPD sessions offered in Southampton as part of these programmes. 2 SEEDS regional diving training sessions have been run virtually during the lockdown period and an overnight camp was run for the first time in October last year with coaches from Albatross and Southampton.

Facility Development

The redevelopment plans at Amersham have continued through the lockdown period and the new centre is still planned to open in late 2021. The current pool will remain open during the build period, but the Operator has changed from GLL to Everyone Active.

Albatross continue to train locally at the Abbey School during the week and travel at weekends to Hemel Hempstead, the London Aquatic Centre, Southampton and Southend. During the winter and spring before the pools closed Albatross were also training at Amersham once a week in support of, principally, their elite divers who needed more 3m springboard training time. As seen at the British Championships and the early open events this time was extremely beneficial and the club is hopeful that it can continue once pools reopen. Albatross are also aware that Amersham will have a desire to develop their Skills divers further and have offered their expertise in growing from a Novice club to include Age Group diving as part of the Amersham programme should it be wanted.

The signing of the contract between Reading Borough Council and GLL has been delayed due to the Covid-19 lockdown which may well lead to a delay in build.

At this time we await the report from Swim England on June 15 that will give guidance on the reopening of pools for training, but we hope that we will be back in the water by September albeit in small groups. Both Amersham and Albatross have been providing regular training through the Zoom app to their divers during lockdown and whilst it is clear that strength and conditioning fitness is being maintained, and in some instances improved, both clubs are yet to realise the full impact of our divers being away from the boards for this significant period of time. Amersham have concerns that their older Skills divers have lost their opportunity to compete in this years Nationals and they will be too old next year so may leave. Albatross do not have any divers in this category but recognise that it is possible that not all their Learn to Dive divers will return as they may have lost interest in the sport. Promoting diving and the clubs will be essential once we can resume but recognising that reduced numbers in the pool may be needed for safe social distancing which will put pressure on finding pool time and the economics of running a financially viable session.

Local Recognition

Albatross have 2 nominees proposed for the Reading Sports Personality Awards which will now take place in November this year.

Thank you. Emma West. 4 June 2020