

Berkshire & South Bucks Management Board

Artistic Swimming Report

16th June 2021

(Reviewing June 2020 to May 2021)

Reading Royals Synchronised Swimming Club ¹ is now the only club in the Berks & South Bucks County Region providing training for artistic swimming as Bracknell has now closed (I believe the impact of social distancing reduced membership to an unsustainable level). Reading Royals' membership has also been affected by the hiatus in training brought about by pool closure. Although we would anticipate some loss of members around natural break points such as Christmas or summer, this has been considerably higher than usual especially as we have come out of lockdown.

We did manage to provide some training throughout lockdown delivering virtual land sessions when pools were forced to close. These sessions were based on strength training rather than flexibility as there is less risk of injury. With the reduction in training and consequently lower costs (no pool hire or freelance coach costs), club fees were also significantly reduced. With the opening of pools but restrictions on the number of swimmers in pools at any one time, these virtual sessions have continued in order to go some way to provide the volume of training required. Fees are now back to their pre-Covid levels although pool time per swimmer is reduced given the restrictions noted above.

The only domestic competition swimmers have been able to attend in the last 12 months was the Virtual X Games which was a land based skills competition. Our entry in the 12 & Under category came 20th; 13-15 entrant was 4th; Junior 5th and Senior entrant 9th. It was a challenge to motivate the older swimmers for this competition although younger swimmers, particularly 12 & Under were willing participants in the pre-competition trials. Coaches also found it challenging to provide training for the event.

Formal assessment of ability has recommenced through 3 virtual grade days taking place in June, July and August organised by the South East Region. These will be followed by a number of physical assessment days in Reading in September, October and December. A number of our swimmers will be required to pass 1 or, in some cases, 2 grades to be able to swim at upcoming competitions.

All domestic competitions for the remainder of this year will be virtual events. In September, the British Championships (otherwise known as Champs) will take place. This is a junior and senior competition for swimmers of 15 years of age and above with the appropriate grade level. In October, there will be the National Age Groups competition which has competitors in various age groups up to 15 years of age. This will be routines only and will be restricted to 3 solos and 3 duets per age group per club. This will restrict our usual submissions in some categories although for 12 & Under we have limited appropriate swimmers as they have not been able to obtain the required grade levels to swim during the lockdown period. This has been compounded by club missing the swimmer submission deadline for the first virtual grade day in June (the procedure on submission has been clarified). For the Masters competition in November, Reading is unlikely to have any

¹ Note that the club plans to change its name to Reading Royals Artistic Swimming Club at the next AGM on the 27th of June if agreed by members as per the constitution.

competitors swimming for the club. Finally, in December there is the Combo Cup which has no grade requirement for entry and excludes elite swimmers from entry.

In terms of national squad swimmers Reading has supplied 9 swimmers to the junior and senior teams. 4 swimmers from Reading (in a squad of 10) were selected to perform at the most recent competition entered by GB which was the Senior GB team swimming at the Senior Europeans in Budapest in May. 6 swimmers from Reading have been selected for the Junior team that will be swimming in Malta in July. An additional Reading swimmer is training for the mixed duet in the Junior category 3 Reading swimmers make up the quintet of athletes working towards building on the success of Isabelle Thorpe and Kate Shortman in delivering a world class Senior duet pairing. For the Youth programme there are currently 4 Reading swimmers. An additional 2 swimmers have been seconded to the Junior training sessions. The Youth team were due to compete in Croatia recently but the entry was withdrawn due to logistical challenges. An internal competition will be held in Hengrove this weekend instead.