

Report to Berkshire and South Buckinghamshire County Management Board

Wednesday 16 June 2021

Aquatic Discipline: Diving

Programme

As in previous years, there remain just two Swim England 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.

Both Albatross and Amersham are SwimMark accredited clubs with reaccreditation being awarded to Albatross at the last regional board.

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 master's programme.

As with all aquatic disciplines the last year has been a challenge with 3 periods of pool and dry facility closures, but both clubs have maintained virtual training programmes with little loss in membership numbers. Training across both clubs incorporated strength and conditioning programmes, drills, HITT, and stretching. Newsletters supported communication and quizzes and social media challenges helped with social interaction. Members and parents were briefed through zoom meetings.

Albatross is an entirely volunteer run club so did not have any payroll liabilities whereas Amersham have some paid staff but were assisted financially in their support by members paying a reduced fee.

Competitive Calendar

Clearly due to the Covid-19 crisis the competitive calendar for the past year has been limited but Albatross took part in the recent Level X events gaining top 10 positions in both Series 1 and Series 2 videoed dry drills events. Series 3 will be run in the home pool over 3 phases in June, July, and August. We are currently in phase 1 and whilst it has been hard to generate the same level of competition spirit and adrenaline, the series has supported some variation in training programming and provided periods of focus.

Going forward there are plans to hold the English Schools Diving Championships at the LAC in December and potentially an open event in Southampton in October should licensing permit.

Administration & Coaching

Both clubs remain committed to supporting past divers who wish to remain in the sport. Amersham has a thriving Master's section diving at National, International and World events and Albatross now have a growing group of older girls who will form a Novice Masters team when events allow.

Over the past few years 4 divers from Albatross have taken the opportunity of full scholarships to universities in America. 3 have now graduated, with one shortly finishing 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. A further diver is going out to Florida in August to start her degree whilst having the opportunity to continue with her diving.

Albatross have also been fortunate to have had elite divers selected for support on the aquatics Diploma in Sporting Excellence Programme (DiSE) for the last few years. This programme is run through Loughborough College with the support of Swim England. 2 divers are half way through the current programme which, when completed, will support university applications with 64 UCAS points.

Albatross have funded 1 diver achieve their Assistant Coach **theory** (old Level 1) qualification this year and 2 divers their Diving Coach (old Level 2) **theory** qualification. A misunderstanding on regional grant availability during lockdown last year meant that there was no regional support available. The pool practical is still unavailable with the IOS. Sadly, the club lost a Diving Coach to cancer during the year and a second coach is currently under hospital supervision so unable to coach. This has put a strain on programme coverage with all volunteers taking on additional sessions. 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. The lockdowns and unavailability of courses will, however, mean a void period in young coaches coming forward.

One Albatross older diver qualified as a regional judge on the inaugural virtual Judge 1 course. Those Albatross coaches with Safeguarding training renewals this year have all completed the virtual course available during lockdown and the club renewed their life saving certificates as soon as pools reopened last summer.

Facility Development and Growth

Despite Swim England funding not being available to clubs over the past year both county clubs continue to enjoy growth and a regular stream of new enquiries. Both clubs are non-selective in their Learn to Dive programmes and will look to their new pools to grow the clubs further and introduce Talent Identification progression (TID). Amersham pool is on track to open this year and will include dry training which will significantly enhance the offer to club members and support the competitive programme. Reading is due to open in 2023. Diving will remain with the club at Amersham so outside the Operator (Everyone Active) lesson programme. There are no current plans for public sessions. Programming pool time challenges exist with diving wanting more pool time currently being used by Operator sessions.

Early programme discussions have taken place with GLL at Reading, but efforts are currently being focused on maximising the board configuration and dry capacity now planning permission has been awarded.

Amersham currently have 85 divers and Albatross 60.

Albatross continue to train locally at the Abbey School during the week and travel at weekends to Hemel Hempstead and Southampton. Session sizes are smaller with bubbles supporting social distancing and diver segregation. This has led to some strain on finances which is being covered by reserves.

Coach development will still be led through Regional SEEDS and ACE programmes which, it is hoped, will start back in the autumn.

Thank you. Emma West. 14 June 2021