

Richards Christmas Moan.

Here we are quickly approaching the festive season (some say I haven't a festive bone in my body). It tends to be a time where we over indulge ourselves, sit on our derrière all day and just mellow. As a coach I hate Christmas, but logically it gives your over worked bodies and minds a time to recover.

Some of the coaches at Backwell are even enjoying the idea of doing a 25 metre dash event with yours truly dressed up as Father Christmas or the Grinch. Shows the calibre of people working with me as everybody knows 25 metre races do not exist!

We are in the Arena League B Final which is approaching fast. As a team, Backwell has adapted exceptionally to life in division 1. Can Backwell beat Clevedon? As a coach I know we are up against 6 great teams in the B final, and I honestly believe we have as good a chance as any in winning the B final, and ending up 9th place in division 1. But for me and some of my swimmers it's about us and Clevedon. Backwell have spent many years in the shadow of its neighbour but now we are about to compete on level footings.

With probably one of the smallest squads in the whole arena league, Why are Backwell achieving? We have a very talented squad with a great mindset when it comes to competing, but probably more importantly, we have swimmers with a great team spirit who always give a 110% effort.

After Christmas, Counties will be on the horizon. We already have more qualifiers than last year, but not as high as my 50 target. So come on swimmers let's use the Soundwell and COB open meets to great effect.

I will probably get into trouble for the next paragraph and will let Alec read it before I send out this letter, a bit like a content warning they put on television. I just finished reading "Why am I stood here?" by Alec Richardson, if you do get a chance to read this book please do as it is a excellent read. Alec is the father of Backwell's own Jake, Stan and Eddie. The reason for me bringing this up is the book is based on Alec's swim across the Bristol Channel; 13 miles of treacherous open water swimming. My point is, after Alec finishes he feels as though he over played the swim and it wasn't as tough as he expected it to be and he felt like a fraud. I will totally disagree with Alec on this point, as the distance always stays relatively the same (can vary slightly due to line taken due to tidal conditions). The weather can be an advantage or disadvantage but out of anyone's control. What probably made the swim feel easier than Alec expected was he was mentally and physically ready for the it and had done all his homework, playing it through in his mind many times before he swam it and he had already faced many of his fears before the swim and was prepared for anything thrown at him. As a coach I try to get all my swimmers to achieve, but preparation is the key to most things with a big dose of determination.

With Counties coming up, if you have managed to swim a qualifying time please do enter as a lot of swimmers would love to have the opportunity to compete at Millfield at that level but have not achieved qualifying times. Representing your team should be a privilege not a chore.

Finally Cotswold league is coming up, and as coaches are aim is to give as many Backwell swimmers the chance to represent their club as possible so please, if you are asked to swim, say yes. Picking a team is hard work and if too many refuse we end up back with the same old reliable swimmers.

In January Backwell are planning on restructuring our lessons. We are planning on forming 2 new sections to our club; Minnows and Marlins (I wanted whitebait but was overruled as normal). Minnows will feed into Marlins and Marlins will feed into Development. Both new squads will be under the Head coach lead and will be focused on mainly technique and skills work but introducing endurance to the groups and preparing them for club swimming.

Minnows will train 6.30 till 7.00 Tuesdays and Thursday and 8 till 9 Saturday mornings, Marlins will train the same but also Sundays from 4 till 5 with Development. Minnows and Marlins will be made from our existing stages 5B, 6 and some 7, and lessons will now go from stage 1 to 6 with 4B becoming 5 and 5 becoming 6.

Hope the above all makes sense and you are not as confused as I am. The reasons for the changes are:

- 1) We can allocate more time to the swimmers at no extra cost to club expenses.
- 2) Swimmers automatically feed from stage 5 or 6, depending on ability and attendance, into one of the groups and will become part of the swimming club earlier and not just having lessons with us.
- 3) If swimmers are going to finish lessons then finish swimming because club swimming is not for them, it happens at an earlier stage and means we can focus on other swimmers.
- 4) We believe swimmers will be far better and younger when they join Development and have a far better chance of reaching their full potential.
- 5) We believe it will modernise Backwell swimming club, increasing membership and moving forward in line with the aims of British Swimming.

This new structure will allow more entry points for swimmers wishing to join our club and we're keen to increase #TeamBackwell's numbers. We will, on top of the actions above, also be trying to work even closer with Backwell Leisure centre via Club Link, forge new links with Portishead swimming club and try advertising in local schools. If any parent or teachers can help in anyway or make other suggestions please talk to any coach or committee member.

THANK YOU but remember it is your club just as much as mine or anyone else's, so the harder we all work the stronger and better we become together.

My last note is to all parents and swimmers enjoy Christmas you all deserve it, but please think moderation as I will hit you hard after Christmas in preparation for Counties, Cotswold and Regional qualifying times. We had 16 Regional qualifiers last year so we have left ourselves a mountain to climb to equal this, so come on swimmers I need HELP here.

Rich.