

Coaching Model - Sarah James Head Coach **Loughborough Town Swimming Club**

My Coaching philosophy is based upon my value system; lessons I learnt as an elite swimmer; British Swimming National Strategies & Plans and Long Term Athlete Development.

It has a number of themes:

- Creating a safe and effective learning environment — Swimming needs to be both educational and fun. Participation increases when children are stimulated, secure and feel they are achieving. Goals need to be clear and achievable, with praise and constructive feedback given equally.
- Treating swimmers as individuals — means working equally hard with those who find tasks difficult, as well as those who are talented. It requires that Coaching sessions are well-planned and geared to the swimmers in that group, and that male and female swimmers have training appropriate to their development.
- Being Firm and Fair — ensuring there is discipline in sessions, appropriate to the age group. Swimmers being clear that their opinions are valued but that there is a time and place for debate!
- Involvement of Parents — for Swimmers to succeed, irrespective of their level of achievement, it is essential that Parents feel involved. Good communication about their child's progress and expectations are important. Honesty and realism are critical. The building of those relationships is very important. With Masters Swimmers, goals need to be set together, and honest, regular feedback given.
- Fair Assessment strategies — Swimmers and Parents need to be clear what the criteria for group movement are, and how this is assessed. Assessment needs to link to long term athlete development and competition planning and be open and fair. Getting the balance right to ensure there is not too much competition and too little training is essential.
- Continuous improvement by integrating current scientific evidence/research into Coaching — using the knowledge gained from my Sport & Exercise Science degree course, and implementing it practically to improve and strengthen programmes. Learning from more experienced elite Coaches and implementing advice on techniques/drills to improve my Coaching skills.
- Formal feedback is necessary to ensure the quality of the programme should be gained from the Executive Committee of the Club; parents and Swimmers. It cannot be based purely on results at competition but on the overall achievement of individual Swimmer's objectives. The Executive Committee each season needs to identify with the Head Coach the measures of importance, which are realistic and agreed. Personal objectives/goals will be set in terms of achievements and training/development. Acting on the results of the feedback to improve both the programme and personally are essential.

Coaching successfully can only occur as part of a team which is committed to the same goals, and is prepared to be reflective, self-critical and continually learn. This means it needs to be undertaken in a club which is committed to excellence in everything it does. The club would want to continually work towards higher levels of accreditation (Swim 21); encourage its Coaches to gain relevant qualifications and continue their professional development. The same themes which apply to Swimmers, also apply to the Coaching team, and working with colleagues. Respect for other Coaches' opinions; making time and space to listen and involving them in compiling the programme, are important issues in generating a team spirit. However as the Head Coach, the responsibility and accountability would be mine to deliver an effective programme to an increasing number of committed Swimmers.

Sarah James
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