



7th August 2018

Dear members,

I am delighted to be starting as your new head coach in September and look forward to a long and successful partnership with Bobcats.

Over the coming weeks and months I will hopefully get to meet as many of you as possible and start sharing information about my coaching philosophy, plans for the 2018/2019 season and how I would like to see the club develop in the medium to long term.

As way of an introduction I thought it might be useful to provide a bit of a history of my involvement in swimming over the past thirty years.

I have spent the last thirteen years working as a full time head coach, most recently at Harrogate Borough Council as head coach and swimming development manager with responsibility for the learn to swim scheme as well as competitive squads. Prior to Harrogate, I was head coach at Bolton Metro for two years and Crewe Flyers for three and a half years.

During my time as a swimmer (1980's and 1990's) I was really fortunate to have what I would consider to be some genuinely great coaches. I started out at Salford, moved to Warrington and ended up with two years at the City of Lincoln Pentaqua Swimming Club. Back then University swimming programmes didn't really exist so you just had to move where the best swimmers were and try to make ends meet. I spent two years training at Lincoln in a group that contained Paul Palmer, Mark Foster, Marc Spackman and a young Mel Marshall (all top class athletes at the time) and learnt a lot about the commitment and especially work ethic required to maximise your potential.

It was at Lincoln that I started to get involved with teaching and coaching and completed my Level 3 coaching qualification in 1997. When my swimming career started to wind down I moved back to Manchester and studied at University for three years, during this time I took on a couple of assistant coach and head coach jobs in the South Manchester and Cheshire area and had a reasonable amount of success getting swimmers to national age group level. The plan was always to find a full-time position in swimming after university but opportunities in the North West did not come up and I ended up working in the engineering industry for a few years with swimming taking a back step.

In 2005, I was following the progress of some of the swimmers that I previously coached who were now winning medals at nationals and qualifying for international teams – this made me more



determined to get back into coaching and in 2005 I applied for the Head Coach position at Crewe Flyers swimming club. I knew the Crewe coach from my swimming days and he was retiring with the club in a strong position to move forwards, this became my first full time position and between 2006 and 2009 the club developed well with two swimmers winning National Age Group Championships in 2008 and one qualifying for the European Youth Olympics in 2009.

I was offered the Head Coach position at Bolton Metro in 2009 and continued to have swimmers gain international call ups and win national age group and youth championships in 2009 and 2010. Bolton was a very different programme then, directly competing with the likes of Gallica and the City of Manchester but with limited resources. Maintaining a programme with 50+ regional swimmers and 15-20 national swimmers in the face of such stiff competition was extremely time consuming and with British Swimming commitments added in there was little time to spend with my partner and then young daughter. I really enjoyed my time at Bolton and think that some great swimmers came out of the programme between 2009 and 2011 with Emma Saunders, Sam Horrocks, Emily Barclay and James Oxborrow all going on to be successful at senior level. Ultimately I had to make a decision between career and family and in 2011 the opportunity came up at Harrogate offering a better work / life balance.

For the past seven years I have worked at Harrogate and have learnt a lot about how to manage and develop a swimming programme. This is experience that I believe I can bring to Bobcats and help to improve everything from the Bobkittens through to producing more national and hopefully international swimmers.

During my time at Harrogate I have continued to work with the ASA and British Swimming, coaching on world class programmes and national level junior camps. The club has achieved record numbers of qualifiers at County, Regional and National level and won medals at the Swim England Nationals for the past three seasons. Harrogate have established themselves as one of the top 5 clubs in Yorkshire with approximately 50 swimmers at regional level and increased numbers qualifying for nationals this season. I am happy to be leaving the programme in a great position to move forwards with financial stability, full squads, a highly trained coaching team and the best disability swimming programme in the UK.

One of the main issues at Harrogate has always been pool time and access to land training facilities, national level swimmers have a schedule of five early mornings (5:00am start) per week and only three evening sessions. These training times plus only one circuit session per week make it difficult



for swimmers to progress from national to international level. I believe that with nine pool sessions and gym access I can put together a programme that really helps swimmers to maximise their potential. This is where Bobcats have an advantage over Harrogate and is one of the main reasons why I decided to look for a new challenge.

I suppose the other main reason for coming to Bobcats is to move closer to home, both me and my partner are from Manchester and our family are all in the Manchester / South Lancs area. We are all looking forward to the move; my 10 year old daughter Angie is keen to join Bobcats and I am determined to do my bit to help put Lancashire swimming back on top.

Have a great summer and look forward to seeing you soon.

Yours in Swimming,

Ian Spencer