

Swim Camp 2011 – Millfield School

Over the summer holidays a small group of PBSC Swimmers travelled to Millfield School, Somerset to participate in a swim camp, which was being run under the instruction of former Great Britain International and Olympian, Ed Sinclair.

During his swimming career Ed Sinclair represented Great Britain at two Olympic Games - Sydney 2000 as part of the 4 x 200 Freestyle relay team which finished 5th and Athens in 2004. He also competed at 4 European Championships winning 6 medals and 5 World Championships winning 3 medals. He also held the British record for three years in the 200 meters Freestyle. His highest World Ranking was 7th in 1999 in the 200m Freestyle Long Course.

Those PBSC swimmers who attended the swim camp were Andrea Houben, Danielle Houben, Jack Shewell-Cooper, Ben Harrison, Georgina Lawson, Eleanor Lawson and Morgan Newman. Eleanor, Andrea and Danielle kindly kept a diary of their experiences, which is detailed in this article and it is hoped it will give an insight to our other members who may wish to take part in future swim camps that the Club may arrange.

Millfield School is an Independent School renowned for its sporting prowess and one of its current pupils is former PBSC Swimmer, Joel Knight who recently won the Gold Medal in the 1500 metres Freestyle at the European Youth Olympics, that were held in Turkey.



Diary of Eleanor Lawson, Danielle and Andrea Houben

Day One

As we arrived we saw the magnificent size of the place and the wonderful facilities. The main part of the School is surrounded by over 100 acres, which includes an equestrian centre, stabling for 50 horses, a 50m Olympic swimming pool, Tartan athletics track, playing fields, a putting green and an indoor tennis centre. They also have a 25 metre training pool and Land Training Facilities. We wished we had these facilities at our school!



The magnificent pool at Millfield School.

We were staying in “Keens Elm” one of the nine boarding houses, so went straight there to check-in. On arrival we were given a swimming hat, a pencil and notebook and allocated our rooms where we went to unpack. We said “Good bye” to our parents who seemed more worried about leaving us than we were about being there on our own! We soon settled into our new environment and headed off to the Library for the introduction meeting.

Ed Sinclair introduced himself and all the other coaching staff, and then we headed straight to the pool complex. First we went to the exercise room where we were given instruction on “reaction” exercises and stretches. After that we had our first session in the swimming pool where Ed had us concentrating on sculling and the underwater phases for each of the strokes. After the pool session we did a team building exercise which was great as it helped us to get to know all the other swimmers that had come to the swim camp. We went to bed tired after a long but exciting day!

Day 2

With a great deal of trouble we all woke up at 7.30 am to go over to the common room for breakfast and the daily register! We had toast, nutella, cereal and fruit before making our way over to the swimming pool for our next session. In this session we focussed mainly on front crawl and in particular on kick drills.

After that we went straight over to the exercise room for a land training session, which was very tiring. PBSC swimmers aren’t used to the early starts and land training so this was all very much a new experience for us, it also makes you realise the hard work that the very best swimmers put in.

Some of the exercises we did were side plank, push-ups, sit ups and press ups. We also used stretchy exercise bands to work our tri & biceps. We did lots of work to strengthen the tiny muscles in our shoulders.

After this we had lunch of Spaghetti Bolognese and shortbread biscuits, there was also a vegetarian option.

After lunch we had a presentation by swimmer, Rob Francis who spoke to us about his journey through swimming and how he got to where he was. We also got to ask him questions. Rob Francis is a former British medley swimmer. He was born in South Africa and is a two times European Championships silver medallist in the 400 m individual medley in 2001 and 2003. He also won the silver medal at the 2004 World Championships in the same event. At the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens he represented Great Britain in the men's 200m individual medley in which he reached the semi-final, and the 400m individual medley finishing 12th in the heats.



Robin Francis



Danielle, Georgina and Ben paying attention in class!

We then had another session in the swimming pool during which the coaches concentrated on backstroke. We worked on our technique and turns which was fun.

After this session we had our evening meal and spent the evening in the common room playing WII sports. It was also a good opportunity for us to make friends and chat with the other swimmers, one of whom went to Dame Alice Owens in Potters Bar but swims for a Club in London. We went to bed tired knowing we had another early start.

Day 3

This was another very tiring day. We woke as usual for breakfast at 7.30 am and from there we went straight to the pool for sessions where the coaches focussed upon breaststroke. We did lots of drills. We had a swimmer from Wales come to talk to us at this session. He told us that he swims and trains at a University in America and that he is currently the 4th fastest breaststroker in Great Britain.

After the pool session it was straight into Land training where we were taught how our muscles work and how we can activate our muscles.

We then had lunch of cous cous and carbonara before heading off for another lecture that taught us about the importance of nutrition and stretching, something that we Potters Bar swimmers need to do. It was really interesting and we learnt about the stretches to do before and after training and those to do before racing. They also taught us about the importance about how we should eat in the week leading up to competition, which was all new to us.



Andrea

We then had another session in the swimming pool, practising butterfly and underwater butterfly kick. We also tried underwater butterfly kick on backstroke.

We had another fun night in the common room making friends and our coaches ordered in “takeaway” Pizza for us which was great. We went to bed tired knowing we had another early start the next day.

Day 4

It was the last day and we were all exhausted but dragged ourselves out of our beds and went across for our last breakfast in the common room. We were all watching MTV when Marianna came in to do the register and she informed us that Ed Sinclair had said that today's pool session would be for two hours!! At the pool we went through all the four strokes, practising the strokes and turns. We also received instruction on relay take overs and "flip turns". Some of our parents arrived early so they saw some of the instruction we were getting and could see that their money had been well spent! After the pool session we all went upstairs for a debrief on the swim camp. We were all awarded certificates, a strawberry milkshake and a small gift of a pencil made of recycled money. We then had our Swim Camp Group photograph. Ed Sinclair signed all our photographs and posed for the photograph with us.



Ben, Jack, Danielle, Morgan, Eleanor and Georgina in the group photo

It was a really great experience and we all benefitted from taking part in this swim camp. We made lots of new friends and enjoyed the training with Ed Sinclair, as well as experiencing the great facilities that they have at Millfield School. It will be an experience we will all remember when we get older and we'll be putting into practise the many skills that we learned.

We can't wait for the next Swim Camp!!