**Okehampton Otters Chair’s update regarding the new timetable which goes live from 7th May 2023:**

*Hello to* *all*, since the last Otters Swimming Club update of 1stApril 2024 (see bottom of email), we have continued to listen to the feedback received from parents in connection to the changes that will be introduced in two phases; the first commencing from Tuesday the 7th May and the second from the new swimming season at the beginning of September.

We have now responded individually to every query received concerning the new timetable and other activities swimmers might have (we have some very talented young people). and the following are some further changes we plan to undertake:

1.      To provide some additional flexibility, we will blend Squads **A** and **B** to enable swimmers to have more option on when they swim, resulting in this group having access to swim coaching on a Monday and/or a Thursday evening.

2.      Where the coach believes it is practical and provided there is space in the pool, we will aim to enable a swimmer to attend one session a week in a squad below their allocated squad, this will where possible replace one of the sessions in their normal squad, this will be considered on a case-by-case scenario due to the practicalities mentioned above.

3.      However, from September 2024 when the new season commences, if people wish to continue with the agreed temporary changes listed in Point 2, they will need to request this adjustment continues. The swim coaches will consider requests to see if this meets the needs of all swimmers and sessions can continue safely.

Swim England have been made aware of all planned changes, they have supported the approach we have adopted and have been complementary regarding the flexibility we have provided.

Moving forward there is a desire to offer additional swimming sessions but to undertake this, we need to consider funding into the club, the ability of coaches to cover the sessions, and a sufficient number of pool side helpers.  If you would like to volunteer to help support a session, please let the Committee know via the *OttersComms email*. All support is gratefully received.

We wish to provide a broad offer to swimmers and believe we are offering something many other clubs are not, with the flexibility mentioned above, and in catering for swimmers of various standards. We aim to support those who like to swim for pleasure or fitness and those who want to start/enjoy competing in gala’s; we hope to have more Okehampton galas in the future. In addition, we would love to go further and believe we can help some swimmers to achieve their dreams of competing at a national level, which rarely happens for a smaller club.

We will be running a fun swimming event before the summer break to allow people to come together to swim and have a BBQ.   There will be a small charge to cover costs and hopefully provide a small profit to help with the running costs of the club.  We hope that you will be able to attend to get to know the swimmers, other parents and the new committee and will be posting the date shortly.

With best wishes, Carl.

Oke Otters Committee Chair.

**Otters Swimming Club Chairs previous update**

**Swimming Club Chairs update April 23**

Hello all,

I hope you are well and are enjoying the Easter break.

Some of you may be aware that the club has been through a period of change over the past few months, some of which has been difficult on occasion, but I hope that we have become stronger as a club due to the challenges experienced.

I have organised a regular meeting with Swim England to share the good work that is taking place and to ensure the club continues to move forward so that the club can have a great future. We have a new larger Committee, blending people who have been involved with the club for several years and some who are new like myself. My aim when I was fortunate to be chosen as the Clubs Chair, was to try and have a club that provided a range of swimming opportunities for people of all abilities.  I however, found this is easier said than done and that there will always be some compromises.

The new Committee has met twice since forming to discuss several matters; one being what could we propose to improve the offer for current swimmers whilst putting in place an offer that could attract new swimmers.   I have made myself available on a couple of evenings to speak to people about the proposals and will continue to try and be available most Fridays in the café if people would like a chat.

As a committee, we have agreed on a phased approach to some changes to how we operate but in doing so, have tried to keep the changes to a minimum.   The changes have also been discussed with Swim England who have given their support.

The following are the key changes that we have agreed to implement in the first phase from the 7th of May 2024:

1. Adopting a squad approach, which to an extent is already in place where swimmers are placed in a lane that suits their ability.   There will be five squads and coaches are working to confirm which squad a swimmer will be placed in.

Further news in which squad a swimmer will be placed including which days and times the sessions will be run, will be provided in the next 2 weeks.

1. The five squads will provide swimming from 1 hour to 8 hours a week, with the option of an extra 2 hours for the most senior squad.  This almost mirrors the current offer of 1-7 hours per week.  The difference to the current approach is the squads will swim on set days during the week.

1. The standard of coaching across all squads will be tailored and set by the clubs Head Coach – Mathew Henry.   He will be supported by the clubs other coaches and the Committee have given him their full support.

1. For those squads that Matthew does not coach directly, he will ensure he attends those sessions every four weeks.

1. The club is wishing to build greater links to the Okehampton Swim School and with the local schools.

1. We wish to introduce a system that every half term, there will be some feedback to parents / guardians by the respective coach on how their swimmer is progressing.  We would like to hear from you and swimmers on how this may be implemented.

1. We wish to provide some flexibility, where some swimmers will have the opportunity to swim for a transitional 1 hour a week in the next highest squad with the coaches blessing.  By undertaking this, it will enable a swimmer to transition to the next squad should they wish to.

1. Further flexibility can also be an option to the beginning of September, where if swimmers wish to swim less hours than the squad they have been placed in, they can and will be charged the current fee structure for the hours they swim.   The respective Coach will need to be made aware of this request and the Treasurer, so the correct fee is charged.

1. We will be utilising the 25m pool (Short Course - SC) at Okehampton for all age groups and abilities and providing training in a 50m pool (Long Course - LC) for more competitive swimmers at Mount Kelly.

1. Fees will remain unchanged until the beginning of September, with the transitional 1-hour being charged at £3.50.

1. For those swimmers who will be placed in the squad that swims 8-hours per week, the monthly fee will be £75.00, an increase of £8.00 from the current advertised charge of £67.00 for 7-hours per month, with this including a 2-hour training session at Mount Kelly.

1. An optional 2-hour training session will be offered on an invite only basis by Matthew Henry on a Wednesday at Mount Kelly.   This session will incur an additional charge beyond the squad fee.  For clarity, this is a Okehampton session and not a private session.

1. From the 2nd ofSeptember 2024, the club will introduce holiday training, and this will be incorporated into the revised squad fees.  As a club, we will then be mirroring other swimming clubs that provide training throughout the year, with only Bank Holidays and the month of August being free from training.

There may be an occasional day that training may not be take place, however the club will always provide ample notice if there is a need to make a change.

I will keep you updated in the following months and look forward to speaking with some of you in the Café on a Friday, and we will aim to have a kit sale every other week so please do come along to meet with me and other Committee Members.

With best wishes,

Carl Brazier

Committee Chair – Okehampton (Otters) Swimming Club.