

Notes from meeting of Swim England Water Polo Leadership Group with Regional Managers, held via Zoom on 7th December 2020

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24th September 2020 were approved and are ready for publication.

The following actions were agreed:

- Setting up of new mini water polo programme – Ongoing
- Setting up of new school's water polo programme involving schools that do not presently have water polo included in their curriculums.
- Setting up of Water Polo Referee workshops in conjunction with the British Water Polo League. As there was no league competition taking place in 2020, it was agreed that this would be rolled over to the 2021 season.
- Setting up of inclusion of mini water polo within the Learn To Swim programme of Swim England. This was ongoing and further discussions were being held with the Learn to Swim team of Swim England on how this could be rolled out and presented to Learn to Swim Schools and clubs.
- Rachel Bailey updated that DiSE is now being delivered online and that the learner requirement has been met. There is a freeze on talent funding across Swim England business and there is a need to look creatively at future delivery.
- Rachel Bailey was meeting with other talent leads to make consistent decision on international travel.
- Education of the role of Regional Coaches will be taken forward. Explaining their role in Regional Academies and make sure all academies were teaching the required programme.
- Rachel Bailey hoped to meet all Regional Managers and then also meet with the regional discipline committees (*post meeting note: RB is meeting with me in January, prior to our meeting on 1st February, which she will be attending*).

Update from Rachel Bailey, Head of Performance

- Rachel informed the meeting that there were no four managers across Swim England in control of the various disciplines. There was not now a development officer for water polo.
- There was not a lot of growth at the moment due to the present situation.
- She informed the meeting that there was guidance available on the programme of skills required, and that Regional Academies should not be just for training regional teams.

- Work was progressing on a National Calendar, but this did not include competition at present.
- For 2021 it was only going to be the Under-14s and Under-16s due to the constraints of budget, for the inter-regions. This competition would be handed back to the volunteers who have run it in the past (Mike Heskeith, Joanne Mountfield and Mike Beard). The competition was cost neutral.

Funding

- The Leadership Group in conjunction with Swim England had made various bids for grant funding. Together with 11 other sports within Sport England, they had made a bid for upwards of £1.5 million. The bid covered administration, running the national team, coach improvement.
- They had also made another bid for £1.3 million over four years. This was to cover development for the future, including regular training sessions. The result would be known by mid-December (18th).
- As previously mentioned, a Calendar of Dates was being worked on. They initially are working on an 18th month cycle, and in the future want to extend this to cover a four year period. The calendar would cover such items as BWPL programme, key dates for National Team players (this is hoped to be out by Christmas). The BWPL already has a basic calendar set up, and this would be included in the SE Calendar to avoid clashes.

National & Regional Academies

- Norman Leighton, now back off of furlough, reported that they wanted regional academies to look at 07 and 08 players and feed information back through to him on recommendations for the National Academy. It was stated that going forward they wanted the regional academies to work more closely with the national programme.

Competition

- The whole competition structure across the country was being looked into at all levels.
- A new virtual competition was being envisaged similar to that which was being run in swimming, Water Polo Level X. A series of drills was being put together which clubs could compete at within their training sessions at all age levels. Points would be awarded according to the competition of each task, and a national points table produced. It was pointed out that not all clubs had the potential to compete as some clubs had yet to be allowed back to water polo training and maybe SE should be concentrating on that first!
- The Rule of six is the accepted rule in Tier 1. The negative effect of this rule has been raised with DCMS and staff continue to work on trying to adapt the rule. Interaction remains an issue even in Tier 1.
- The rules of Tier 2 and 3 continue to be developed. The Guidance documents are available online to all clubs. It is important to note that DCMS are setting the rules, not Swim England, and this should be conveyed to the community.

Officials

- A new grading system for water polo referees across the country, getting away from the previous grading. The first part of this was to track down the current active referees and regrade these.

- First level of referee would be a Club grade for players aged 14 years and upwards. The idea of this is for coaches and parents who want to officiate just at club level.
 - Next level would be for regional level, for local leagues, county competitions etc.
 - Next level would be National level where referees would officiate at National events and BWPL, BUCs and ESSA events.
 - Final level would be for International officials.
- It has not been worked out yet whether this will be a numbered system or letting.

Tutors

- An appeal has gone out for tutors across the South West and South East Regions. Ideally the candidate would have a teaching or education background, but if not, this could be overcome. Funding would be given by Swim England to achieve qualification.

Recruit Lapsed Swimmers into Water Polo

- The question was asked if Swim England could provide a list of lapsed swimmers who could be approached by clubs to recruit into water polo. It was explained that this was a very difficult thing to achieve because of GDPR and also when did a member become lapsed? It was proposed that clubs were in a better position to recruit swimmers who had become disillusioned with swimming, and try to recruit them into the sport at a local level.

Coach Lead steps down

- Coach Lead for Swim England, Sean King, has stepped down from this position due to his work commitments with his day job. The search is on for a new coach lead.

Meeting closed at 21:10