



Swim England East Region ran an open water coach development day as part of their 2019/2020 development plan, aimed at providing coaches with open water information in the winter months to help them plan for the next open water season back at their clubs.

The day was put together by Mike Parker, Swim England National Talent Officer and Open Water Technical Lead, who invited speakers to cover a wide range of open water subjects. The event was a pilot and it was great to have 17 coaches sign up to attend.

The day started with Mike explaining his role in open water swimming with the talent pathway for athletes as well as coach development opportunities, such as coaching roles and shadowing opportunities at regional open water development camps.

Although many coaches in the room had completed the Level 2 Open Water Coach qualification, the importance of all coaches who want to coach in an open water environment completing the qualification was stressed, particularly from a health and safety point of view.

The open water competition pathway was also explained to give coaches an idea of where their swimmers could go to get vital racing experience in the short open water season.



Sharon Lock, Swim England National Masters and Open Water Officer, then gave an overview of the recent history and development of open water swimming, which has been an Olympic sport since 2008. The growing popularity of open water swimming provides an excellent opportunity for clubs to add open water as another option for their athletes. To

support this, Swim England have open water club awards available to reward athletes for learning key open water skills, as well as funding opportunities to help clubs get started.

Jacque Marshall, Head Coach of Northampton SC, then spoke to attendees about how her knowledge of open water swimming has developed over the years, from how she introduced open water swimming at her club initially to their current offer for long distance and open water athletes. This included the benefits to the club and it's swimmers, some ideas for sessions and annual planning, as well some challenges that clubs may face, e.g. access to open water venues or additional pool time.

Next up was Bernie Deitzig, British Swimming Marathon Swimming Lead, who gave an overview of what it takes to become an open water swimmer at the top level and how those requirements have become tougher in recent years.



Bernie gave the coaches an idea of the wide range of skills swimmers need and the training the athletes undertake to be able to compete on an international stage. This included the importance of being a top level long distance swimmer in the pool, as all top open water swimmers were good at both pool and open water, there was no longer just an open water swimmer.

He also showed coaches how he analyses the performance of rival athletes to help plan race tactics and to monitor the progress of British athletes race by race.

The day finished with nutritionist Jasmine Campbell explaining the fuelling requirements of swimmers who are competing in distance events in both pool and open water. This included tips on how swimmers can rehydrate, refuel and recover to required levels to ensure they are able to maintain their performance levels during training and competitions.

Coaches in attendance gave good feedback on the content of the day and enjoyed the opportunity to network with other open water coaches. All attendees were given the opportunity to provide feedback on topics they would like covered for future open water coach development opportunities.

The Region would like to thank Mike, Sharon, Jacque, Bernie and Jasmine for taking the time to support the open water coach development day.