



CATHAL BRUGHA BULLETIN

New Year Message from the Chairman, Ciaran McGurk

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our members, players, coaches, parents, supporters and all our Committee members best wishes for 2021.

We have all been affected by the pandemic, not only on a playing but also on a personal front. As a water polo and swimming community we salute our members working in the NHS and all the carers and other essential workers. We also recognise all the hardships and the myriad of problems and issues which the pandemic has wreaked on us all.

Although it looks like there is light at the end of the tunnel, I urge caution and continued patience as its likely to be a minimum of 2-3 months before we are back in the pool full time. I would like to thank Stephen Ramsey and all our Club COVID officers and trust that they, the coaches, committee, and all volunteers will continue to guide us in these uncertain times.

The committee continues to meet monthly working on your behalf and the club is in a healthy position thanks to their hard work and the support of all our parents and players. We achieved our Clubmark award during lockdown, which was a significant achievement championed by Phil Kelly.

Our U17 girls also won the Outstanding Team Award in the recent Swim Ulster awards, for winning the Irish U17 Cup back in January. In February, our men's team won the Brother Philip Knock Out Cup.

In the Swim Ulster Awards, Lisa O'Kane was awarded the Volunteer of the Year for the work she continues to do for Cathal Brugha. She is the current Club Secretary but is heavily invested in promoting community inclusive activities, finding funding opportunities to the benefit of not only Cathal Brugha but also other Belfast & Ulster water polo clubs.

The coaches are currently working on programmes for each team and we will roll these out in the coming weeks. These initiatives will help prepare teams with fitness, tactical awareness and health and wellbeing activities so that we are all better prepared for when we get back to the water.

Lastly, I would like to pay tribute to all our athletes, of all ages, they have responded so well to the difficult circumstances they have encountered, abiding by the new restrictions and dealing with the upheaval in such a positive manner.

We now look forward, with hope that the rollout of vaccines will lead to a significant improvement in all areas of all our lives.

Thanks to everyone for trying to keep us all safe at training and thanks for all the efforts made by so many to try and maintain our fitness, our physical health and our wellbeing during Covid-19.

See you all in 2021 in the meantime take care and stay safe!

Ciaran McGurk, Chairman

On behalf of the Committee

Highlights of 2020

Pool successes



Although our season was halted abruptly in March, we still celebrated two cup wins before the end of February. Our U17 girls won the Irish U17 Cup and the senior men won the Brother Philip Cup.

We established Polo4Life to get new players and former members to try or return to water polo to keep fit – it was so successful that the adult group opted to continue after the 8-week pilot. We subsequently received funding to start this again in November but have been unable to get back in the pool since!

Lockdown memories



Without competitions and training, we set about keeping our members busy during lockdown - 64 player profiles were completed when we learnt all about memorable trips, dream dates, fantasy dinner companions and who they would or wouldn't like to isolate with. We even got an alternative profile sent through for the infamous Johnny Donnelly from our friends in North Dublin. As well as getting to know our members better it helped us reconnect with former members around the world. We even managed to get some to join Facebook as a result. We also held caption competitions, recognised our key workers, held a Zoom quiz and endless hours of Zoom meetings. And when the Last Man Standing competition could finally be completed, Brian Murphy was a worthy winner.

Getting active again

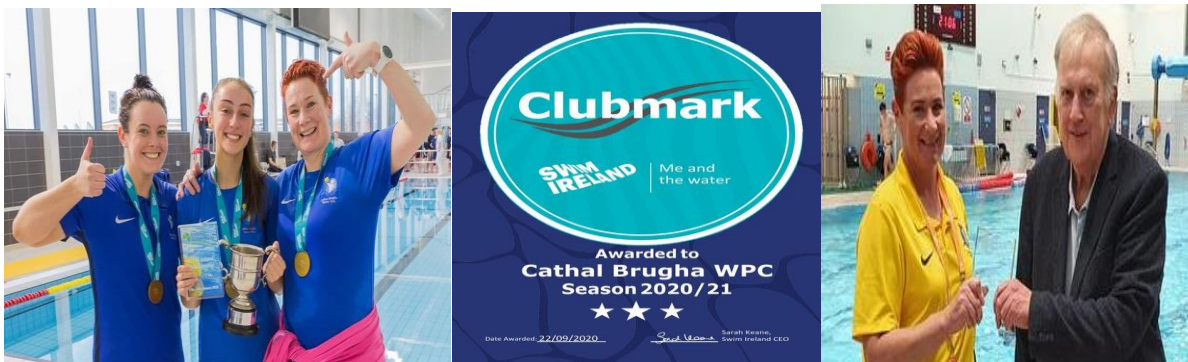


Once lockdown restrictions were eased several coaches voluntarily organised land training and outdoor swimming training for their squads, while others took to beaches and makeshift swimming pools to keep swimfit.

Our senior teams resumed training in August and we recruited over 35 COVID officers to make sure every junior member could get back training in September. We even got to play some Friday night matches as well as practice matches against Bangor's U15 girls and a depleted Cu Chulainn senior team. Unfortunately it was short-lived.

We also took part in Swim Ireland's Pound the Pavements challenge in October / November, a whole-club activity that got everyone moving and some coaches organised team activities within the restrictions.

Awards



We still racked up some awards this year. U17 goalie Ciara McKee was named as MVP at the U17 Cup.

Lynn won Female Coach of the Year at the Belfast City Council Sports Awards – unfortunately the awards night itself was cancelled back in March.

We had 2 wins at the Swim Ulster Awards in December – the U17 girls won the Outstanding Team award and Lisa won the Water Polo Volunteer of the Year award.

The prestigious Clubmark award was also achieved during lockdown and several coaches & committee members completed online training courses and received CPD points.

We were awarded funding from Sport NI, Belfast City Council, the Department for Communities and the Public Health Agency to enhance our work in the club & community and look forward to putting this to good use once we are back to normal.