

Club stars back in the water

by Hannah
GREAVES



With Wyndley baths finally back up and running, Sutton swimmers are making the most of being back in the pool. None more so than Boldmere Swimming Club who, throughout the two year closure, battled on regardless, showing the spirit of true champions.

If there was one lasting image borne of the Beijing Olympics, Ellie Simmonds' beaming face has to be it. With a personality big enough to match her remarkable achievements, Ellie captured the hearts of the nation when she became Britain's youngest ever individual Paralympic gold medalist.

But her success did not stop there.

On her victorious return to the UK, with two gold medals under her belt, Ellie Simmonds MBE also became the youngest person ever to be honoured by the queen and was awarded the BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year accolade.

Originally from Aldridge, Ellie, who suffers from achondroplasia or dwarfism, now spends her weekdays living and swimming in Swansea where she trains with the British Paralympic Squad.

But Sutton still has good reason to call her its own, for it was here, at Wyndley baths, that she first learned to swim.

Aged just four-and-a-half, Ellie joined a club which recognised her potential in its infancy and enabled her to

develop that talent to the level she has reached today.

Boldmere Swimming Club has come a long way since its inception in 1895 at Powell's Pool in Sutton Park.

It is now the West Midlands' largest sports club, with sessions for its 500 members held every day of the week at six different baths across the region.

Its success stories are plentiful, and having recently won the Midlands Regional Final in the National Swimming League, Boldmere is starting to make real waves in the sporting world as its swimmers prepare to compete against other Olympians in the national final on April 26.

But there is more to the club than just competitive swimming.

Instead it is in its inclusive ethos and unfailing voluntary support that club chairman Keith Munday insists the true heart and soul of the club lies.

"I think because of our individual success stories such as Ellie and our team achievements, people tend to think Boldmere is just for competitive swimming, but that actually only makes up a third



Boldmere swimming coach, Jayne Luckett, with some of the clubs promising young stars. Picture by Steve Harlow

of what we do," he says.

"Two thirds is in instruction - teaching young people to swim and giving them a chance to enjoy it.

"Our competitive swimmers will swim five or six days a week for up to two hours a session, but that is not for everyone.

"Others come to a couple of sessions a week because they enjoy it but don't want to swim competitively."

But no matter how many swimmers the club has, or how dedicated they are, Boldmere could not function without its dedicated team of qualified coaches.

With only one paid coach, it relies heavily on volunteers who give up their time to teach the swimmers.

Jayne Luckett, 41, a deputy headteacher from Walmley, has been volunteering as a coach since 1999.

I met her as she prepared to take a training session at Castle Vale baths - the first of three weekly sessions she teaches.

Girls and boys aged from nine to 11 line up at the top of the pool ready to go.

Swimming hats pulled on, goggles in place and water

bottles at the ready, these guys mean business.

As a competitive swimmer herself - Jayne is the reigning British Amateur Swimming Association Master and Senior Champion in her age group for the 50m and 100m

breaststroke - she understands the level of hard work and dedication it takes to succeed.

But more than that, it is her love of the sport that shines through.

"It's in my blood, I have a real passion for it," she said.

"My dad was a coach, I love it, I love to see the children compete and get new personal bests.

"But there is also a very strong teaching side at Boldmere and I think the two marry up very well.

"If you just want to come once a week to do lane swimming, we can cater for that as well.

"Swimming is a fantastic discipline and a good way to keep fit and meet people, but if children do want to compete, they have got to be committed which they are, or they wouldn't be here."

Jayne knows, as their coach, it is her job to keep that level of interest and commitment up.

"If you think, swimming up and down the lanes can be quite a boring sport, so they have got to love it to put in the effort," she said.

"They will swim about 4,000metres in training three times a week and it is up to me to make sure the sessions are interesting and keep everyone involved."

As she talks, she has one eye on the pool where her swimmers are warming up.

She gives a thumbs up to the youngsters who look to her for approval.

"I do get a lot out of it, especially when their strokes improve and their times come down," she said.

"I see them start off swimming widths and suddenly they get it right and they progress to seniors."

The warm-up is now coming to an end and with an hour's tough training still ahead, my time is up.

I step off the poolside and let Jayne get on with the job she loves - training Boldmere's stars of the future.

For more information about volunteering or swimming for Boldmere, log on to www.boldmereswimmingclub.co.uk



Paralympian, Ellie Simmonds, began her glittering career at Boldmere Swimming Club. (Sutton Coldfield Observer)



Visit our extensive Showroom at:

THE KITCHEN FACTORY

2 Vine St, Aston Birmingham B6 5TS

A-Z Reference P102 (2B)

Open Mon-Fri 10-5 Saturday 10-4

Call on 0121 327 3773

BUY DIRECT FROM THE FACTORY!!

Avoid the middleman - Genuine Made to Order Kitchens and Bedrooms direct from our on site factory at realistic and very affordable prices. High quality 18mm colour co-ordinated carcasses with well over a hundred traditional and contemporary door styles to choose from including made to measure!

Benefits include:

- Free Home Survey by Experienced Designer
- Soft Close Doors & Drawers
- Full Range of Worktops including Granite & Stone
- CDA Appliances at Trade Prices
- Fully Fitted or Supply Only, All Gaswork, Electrics, Plumbing and Plastering Catered for.



Cream & Walnut