

### **Munster Performance Pathway Committee Report 2018/19**

This season's regional PPC members were Mick McCormack (Chairman), Eddie Downey, Kevin Wilmott, Stephen Phelan, Mike O'Connell and Tom Cross. Ex-Officio members of the regional PPC were Sarah Fellner (Munster Regional Pathway Development Coach), John Szaranek (National Centre Limerick Head Coach) and Mary Phelan (sub-committee liaison).

The committee was particularly strong in terms of experience, sharing of ideas and knowledge, and willingness to assist in the development of the region's athletes at all levels. The PPC held a total of 5 meetings between April 2018 and February 2019 with most of these meetings taking place during lunchbreaks at competitions in UL Arena but also at the Kilmurray Hotel. Communication channels via telephone and email have been utilised effectively within the group – a group which is generally limited in terms of face to face meetings due to the nature of the member's roles as coaches.

The Munster Regional Squads which consisted of the Skills Academy (level 1, ages 11-13); the Development Squad (level 2, ages 14-17); and the Pathway Group (level 3, ages 18+) held their various camp days in UL throughout the season and they were very well attended by coaches from around the region at all levels which was a welcome change to recent years. Another successful overnight camp was held at the end of December in UL and the coaches reported some great focus and attitudes from the group although the absence of the more senior swimmers from the Pathway group this year was felt and their positive influence at last year's camps was missed this year.

For the first time, the Munster Skills Academy group held a squad day outside the UL Arena in January. The entire group travelled to Cork where Dolphin Swimming Club kindly donated their pool hours and time as they hosted 39 young athletes in Mayfield Sports Complex for a day of pool work, dryland and nutrition seminars. This initiative was suggested at a Regional PPC meeting last season and brought to the National Performance Advisory Group by the Munster Representatives for approval in May. Other regions will also follow suit and we hope that other clubs within Munster will come on board to facilitate similar external camps soon.

The Regional Development and Pathway swimmers travelled to Glasgow in June 2018 to compete at the Scottish Nationals LC. Coaches from the region were Eddie Downey and Michael Merrigan who assisted alongside Sarah Fellner. This was a successful meet considering the swimmers were in the middle of a heavy training block as they prepared for the Irish Summer Nationals in July, but the team atmosphere was fantastic, and the coaches and swimmers worked particularly well with the Connacht team.

The Munster PPC meetings this season have been quite positive in many respects. One topic which consistently emerges at our meetings is that of Regional Development and Qualifying times and the structures around same. With the new Swim Ireland Terms of Reference for committees and sub-committees now coming into effect, it will allow greater cohesion and communication between each region's sub-committees to work together on a wider range of aspects which affect the athletes and the coaches throughout the regions. We would envisage that initial discussions involving all sub-committees will commence on topics such as qualifying times and meet formats very soon with a view to optimum buy-in from all parties and subsequent improvement among the regional athletes.



It was great to see some of the very top athletes in Munster representing their country at international level this year. Munster swimmers Ellen Cassidy (Dolphin SC), Finn McGeever (Limerick SC), Cadan McCarthy (Mallow swans SC) and Alfie Kelly (swimming out of Newcastle SC but representing Dolphin SC) travelled to Helsinki in Finland for the European Junior Championships 2018. Eoin Corby (Limerick SC) travelled to Baku in Azerbaijan in July to represent Ireland at the European Youth Olympic Festival. All these athletes were an integral part of the Ireland National Squad 2018 and 2019 and along with the other national squad athletes, Jeremy O'Connor and Edel Daly (Limerick SC), they have shown the strength in depth developing within the Munster region – something which again was evident when all of the above athletes competed in Sunderland in January.

We are delighted to welcome John Szaranek to the Munster region. John takes over at the National Centre Limerick from Lars Humer and he comes with a wealth of vital knowledge and top-class experience which he is always willing to share among the other coaches in the region.

Last June, Sarah Fellner contacted me to discuss the possibility of running a Coaches Conference and following discussion between us both and with another Munster PPC member, Tom Cross, we were very pleased to see that in September 2018, Munster hosted a Coaches Conference in UL. There were over 40 coaches in attendance. Seminars were held on “Movement and Dryland for Swimmers” with Lorna Barry, “IM Development” with John Szaranek, “Team Building” with Sarah Fellner, as well as a “starts and turns” session in the pool with John Szaranek. It was a great success and we look forward to running many similar events in the future.

In my role as Chair of the Munster PPC, I have observed many challenges in the last year. This is typical of a region going through a state of progression. What I will say though is that I have been buoyed by the offers of help, volunteerism and sharing of ideas and time from coaches and teachers throughout the region. If this continues then the region will continue moving in the right direction. I would like to thank the current Regional Executive Committee and the other Regional Sub-Committees for their hard work and their assistance all year. The work that goes on behind the scenes is seldom seen and therefore, seldom appreciated. On behalf of the entire PPC, I would like to thank everyone for their time and efforts throughout the region.

On a closing note, Munster swimming lost a good friend and a stalwart in swimming circles recently with the untimely passing of John Dempsey of Limerick SC. He was passionate about the sport at all levels and was very well-regarded by everyone. On behalf of the PPC, RIP John.

**Mick McCormack**

***Chair Munster Regional Performance Pathway Committee***