

Q&A with Dan our new Head Coach

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Winchester.

Did you swim in your youth?

I started swimming when I was 8 years old. My first club was Winchester City Penguins. Later I joined Portsmouth North Sea. It was and still is one of the best clubs in the south coast area. I competed up to National Level (mainly in backstroke) and swam with people who reached international level. I was fortunate enough to be coached by a former British Olympic Coach.

Where did you study?

I studied at Worcester University. I gained a degree in Sport and Exercise Science, specialising in strength and conditioning. Whilst there, I swam for the university team. During this time, I began my career in coaching.

Which Club did you first coach at?

Straight after I finished university in 2008, I coached at Epsom District in Surrey, this was a small club but one of the top 5 in the area. I've been coaching for a total of ten years now – six of those professionally.

Where did your coaching career take you from there?

I have worked with many Olympic swim coaches in Florida, California as well as in the UK. Whilst in the USA, I coached at the club responsible for training Charie Houchin; who went on to win a gold medal for the USA in the 2012 Olympics for the 4x200m relay event. In my previous job at Guildford, I was assistant coach working with Josh Williamson. I assisted him in the training of Marco Loughran; leading up to London 2012.

Do you think we can take any lessons from the American Model?

I think as a country we need to provide better facilities for swimmers making the sport more accessible. We need to be investing in coaching at a junior level – more significant grass roots funds are needed in this area. In America there is also less pressure on very young swimmers; between the ages of 10-14 the focus is development rather than competition – this fosters enjoyment for the sport. This builds a strong foundation and swimmers don't burn out.

What is your best ever coaching achievement?

I take great satisfaction from having trained several national medallists, some of them gold.

What are your top tips for success?

1. Believe in yourself – even when things don't always go as planned.
2. Listen to your coach! – Technique is key, you won't make it to the top without it.
3. Enjoy the sport – this is a major part of your life, if you don't enjoy you won't commit in the long term!

What made you choose Thanet Swim Club?

I wanted to work with a club with strong foundations but with more potential to grow. I've known Dave Whorlow for a number of years and always respected what he's achieved with the club.

So Thanet is your new home – what do you think of the local area?

I really like it, I'm a real 'beach bum' at heart – I love coastal living. I love surfing and water-sports in general, so I intend to make the most of living here.

Do you have any other interests?

I love all sports – football and surfing in particular. I also restore Volkswagen vans in my spare time!

What is your vision for the club?

I want us to be number 1 in Kent and retain this title on a consistent basis. I also want us to be a hub for the Kent area, attracting talent from a wider catchment. In 3-5 years I would like us to be challenging and perhaps dominating Guildford at the South East Regionals.