

Mary Dunne, President of Swim Ireland

Interview by Amy McGowan & Emily Ward from Ballina Dolphins Swimming Club



1. How did you first become involved in swimming?

I became involved in swimming because my children were swimming with Ballina Dolphins and I became a volunteer.

2. On becoming involved in swimming, did you always know that becoming the President of Swim Ireland was one of your aims?

When I got involved in swimming first I knew nothing about Swim Ireland, Connacht Swimming, or anything to do with the structures or governance of swimming so Swim Ireland President was not one of my aims.

3. What other roles have you taken on in swimming before becoming president?

On a local level I became a volunteer helping out with the club from there I became involved in the committee I have held the roles of Secretary, PRO, Chairperson and I am now Treasurer and gala secretary of Ballina dolphin Swimming club . On a regional level, I started out as Connacht representative for our club and from there I became a regional Team Manager, Chairperson and President of Connacht. I am now the Connacht Treasurer for the region. On a national level I served on the board of Swim Ireland for four years, I was on the Audit committee, the Strategic Planning committee, a review committee for the rule book, a review committee for the Memorandum and Articles of the company. I am a National team manager and I volunteer at swim meets.

4. What skills and qualities do you feel you bring to the role of President that differs from past presidents?

I think each president brings their own individual skills set to the organisation. Even though I have undertaken quite a range of roles in the organisation since I got involved 11 years ago I am still relative new to the organisation when you look at past presidents and the length of time they have been involved in the organisation, so I am still very enthusiastic about our sport and the all the aquatic disciplines.

5. Is being President of Swim Ireland what you expected it to be like and is it a fulltime role?

I really did not know what to expect when I took up the role it is not a full time position, you do sit on the board of Swim Ireland during your term of office but as a non-voting board member. You are invited to galas and functions all over the country so it does involve a lot of travelling.

6. What do you feel are the challenges facing swimmers today?

Swimming is very much an individual sport.

7. What encouragement would you give to swimmers when the going gets tough and they are not performing to their standard?

Don't give up if you are training, following the correct diet, getting plenty of rest and sleep and doing what the coach tells you and not to forget to try and fit in a little fun as well things will turn around.

8. How do you feel things have changed in the swimming world from when you first got involved in swimming?

From a competition point of view I think it has got much more serious at a very young age. I remember going to our first Division Two gala and feeling quite over whelmed by the whole experience and being told enjoy it, "it is a nice competition wait until you go to Division 1". I now feel at B C Galas some children have lost some of the fun out of swimming they are wearing expensive skins and are like full time athletes. From an organisational point of view I think we are now one of the leading NGBs in the country.

9. What advice would you give to the next person to take on the role of president of swim Ireland?

Enjoy it go to everything you are asked to go to.

10. What do you see in the future for Swim Ireland?

I see a very bright future for Swim Ireland I think all the hard decisions and work of the last few years will see our sport up there at the top with the other leading sporting organisations in this country. Who would have thought a few years ago that the CEO of Swim Ireland would be President of the Olympic Council of Ireland and helping to address some gender imbalance in the process.