

# Dave Corbett

## Aquaforce Nomination 2011

(Outstanding Contribution at County/Regional Level)

Dave Corbett's involvement in our sport began in the early 1980's when his daughters Joanna and Samantha started swimming at Boldmere Swimming Club. (At that time, Dave (in his 30's) also took the plunge and had lessons with the club). Like many supportive parents, Dave became involved as a timekeeper at Junior League and other galas as the girls became more involved in competitive swimming.

Joanna developed as a competitive swimmer and as a consequence Dave became heavily involved with the City of Birmingham Swimming Club - and has been since its inception in 1985. He has been a driving force in the development of the Advanced Coaching Scheme which provides elite coaching for talented youngsters from across the region in swimming, water polo and synchro - developing their potential and preparing them to compete at the highest levels - regionally, nationally and internationally.

He has made a significant contribution to the management of the scheme throughout the last 26 years and his unstinting efforts were recognised by the City of Birmingham in April 2003 by the award of Life Membership. He was elected Chairman of the City of Birmingham Club in September 2010 and has helped guide the club through some 'troubled waters' during the last 18 months with financial support from the City looking ever more precarious.

As Joanna progressed through the scheme, Dave committed more time to developing as an official, training and qualifying as a Judge, Starter and Referee - with qualifications for both able-bodied and disability events. For the last 18 years Dave has been the Lead Referee at the City of Birmingham 4-day Easter Open - working with the Promoter to stage an "Olympic" programme of events and ensure that the meet continues to encourage the development of quality competition for age group and senior swimmers. In this role Dave has been a check and balance to new ideas, ensuring that all developments have been well thought-out.

In 2009-2010, acting on behalf of Boldmere and City of Birmingham Swimming Clubs, he was instrumental in persuading the ASA Technical Committee of the logic of licensing a meet at both levels 2 and 3. The successes of both 2010 (and 2011) City of Birmingham and Boldmere Open Meets - the first to be dual-licensed within the country - can undoubtedly be attributed to Dave's meticulous planning and attention to detail (a trait for which he has become renowned) which he consistently demonstrates at both District and County Championships where he makes major contributions. In addition, he has helped a range of clubs including City of Coventry, Lichfield, PBSSS, Nuneaton & Bedworth and Lutterworth (in addition to City of Birmingham and Boldmere) - stage numerous galas and licensed meets throughout the region over the last 25 years. Alongside these he has assisted in the staging of

numerous local schools galas, and Dave was the technical director when the Schools Games were held in Coventry in 2007.

**"As a referee it would be surprising to attend a swimming meet in the West Midlands without finding Dave there... he has become a pillar of the volunteer organisation needed to run swimming meets at all levels from schools galas to Commonwealth Games"**  
(Experienced Referee)

One Senior Official recalls: **"I remember Dave as an eager parent coming to ask me as referee why his daughter had been disqualified. Things have changed; Dave is now one of the most knowledgeable and respected referees in the Midlands. He has held the position of Senior Referee at County and Midland Championships - in addition to numerous licensed Open Meets"**.

Dave is a very approachable person and has helped guide many fledgling officials through the ramifications of FINA and encouraged them in their efforts to become qualified, licensed officials.

**"From my point of view, Dave was endlessly patient with training of new officials". (Recently Qualified Official). "He is known for ensuring all officials get an opportunity to do a full range of roles at meets. Everyone is given a 'fair crack of the whip'. A vast amount of work is needed on these occasions and true to style he gives 120%."** (Meet Promoter)

**"He has a way of inventing better use of officials' time on poolside, and many of his ideas are continually used, particularly at regional level"**.  
(County Representative, Regional Management Board).

His two eldest granddaughters have begun competing and this has re-ignited his passion. He is seen regularly at every pool within a 50 miles radius of his home in Sutton Coldfield and he offers his services to help out with officiating whenever and wherever required. At a recent Junior League Gala, his daughters Jo and Sam were present as parents of swimmers competing for two different clubs and were asked by their respective Team Managers if they had their stopwatches ready to record relay splits. They replied **"Absolutely no need . . . Dad will get every time/every split for all swimmers - including the opposition!"**

On the poolside, Dave is the consummate professional. Officiating as a referee at a recent gala (after the first whistle) he was heard saying **"Lane 3: Please step forward."** The response was **"Oh Sorry, Grandad!"** In 2002, Dave was invited to attend the Commonwealth Games in Manchester as 'Examiner of Turns'. The Corbett clan gathered to watch Dave's television debut, only to discover he looked (in the words of the family) a

'Grumpy old Git!' The family 'took the Michael' out of Dave, but learned subsequently that the officials had been instructed not to smile. The following day, following many complaints, the judges were all 'very smiley'.

In the late 1980's Dave was co-opted onto the Warwickshire County executive and he has served on both the Swimming and Management Committees and this involvement continues to this day - long after Joanna and Sam ended their competitive careers. As recognition for his enduring contribution to swimming in the County, he was elected President of Warwickshire in 2005. Dave is Records Officer for both the County and the West Midlands Region **"which he does, as with everything he does, with great zeal. He spends many hours checking all the results from County level to national level to make sure that he does not miss any records"**. (Regional Management Board Member)

An example of Dave's commitment to the wider swimming community occurred in May 2008, when - on the untimely death of Eddie Blight - Westminster Handsworth SC had to be wound up as no club members wished to take on any responsibilities. Dave - having no connection with the club - liaised with the Regional Office staff and took on the responsibility of winding up the club - a process which involved a considerable amount of work. Another example was in October 2010 when Dave was instrumental in the delivery of the Birmingham Swimming Action Group's Inaugural Annual Water Festival- an unlicensed novice competition. Dave provided invaluable advice on the programme content and the technical aspects of the meet- as well as being Lead Referee on the day. Without volunteers such as Dave Corbett our sport would crumble, and there would be no opportunities for athletic stars of the future to climb the first rungs of the Competitive Swimming ladder. **"I have known Dave for over 20 years from when I first joined City of Birmingham as a swimmer in 1989. I would whole heartedly support Dave's nomination for this award."** (Head Coach, Coventry Beacon Programme). When Dave makes a commitment, he sticks to it, to the point that even one of his grandchildren still thinks he has a full-time job - working seven days a week for 'swimming'!

All this from a man who didn't learn to swim until his children were swimming and is - by his own admission - 'not very good'.

