**23rd Deaflympics 2017, Turkey Samsun**

**Coach Report -**

Congratulations to the DeaflympicsGB squad who participated in a successful Deaflympics in Samsun Turkey 2017. This was my first Deaflympics as coach and meeting other athletes and officials from different sports was a new experience for me. I was impressed how well the athletes gelled together from the moment they all met at the airport. The team stuck together throughout the two weeks despite all the challenging situations with the queuing for food, transport and food hygiene. Credit to all central team staff that were really supportive and did a great job tackling these unexpected issues to ensure the athletes could focus on their sport and perform well.

Congratulations to Tom Baxter who led the DeaflympicsGB team as men’s captain along with women captain Bethan Lishman.

A total of 12 swimmers, 7 boys and 5 girls competed as the DeaflympicsGB swimming team. It was a multinational squad with 3 Scottish, 9 English me as coach representing Wales. Some of the swimmers competing with past experience while three swimmers were competing abroad for the first time. The swimmers were supported by team manager Mel Davis, I as head coach and team psychologist Amanda Pitkethly from Edinburgh University who joined us for the first time to support the athletes.

On arrival the swimmers were straight into light training building up to the first day of competition. The training sessions gave the swimmers an opportunity to brush up on some racing skills and practice relay takeovers. They had backstroke ledge available for use and Olympic style blocks. The Olympic pool was 50 metres with 10 lanes and anti-wave lane ropes. Based on the feedback from the swimmers in comparison to the pool facilities in Sofia the standards were much improved. The starting system was a simple box with, red, amber and green lights on each block and while it was perfectly adequate I was hoping to see the starting system used in Texas at the world championships which I thought were more robust and preferred by the swimmers. Overall the competition facilities met the expectations for standards of the competition.

Overall the target was to achieve at least 3 medals. I am delighted to report the team exceeded my expectations and achieved 3 individual Golds, 3 individual bronzes & 1 bronze in the relay -

Danielle Joyce (Gold) 50m Freestyle, 100m Freestyle

 (Bronze) 50m Backstroke, Mixed Freestyle Relay

 (4th) 100m Backstroke

Jack McComish (Gold) 100m Breaststroke

 (Bronze) 50m Breaststroke, 200m Breaststroke, Mixed Freestyle Relay

 (4th) 50m Freestyle

 (8th) 400m Freestyle

Nathan Young (Bronze) Mixed Freestyle Relay

Shiona McClafferty (Bronze) Mixed Freestyle Relay

Tom Baxter (Bronze) Mixed Freestyle Relay

Jasmine Seamarks (Bronze) Mixed Freestyle Relay

Oliver Kenny (7th) 100m Backstroke

 (7th) 200m Individual Medley

 (8th) 200m Backstroke

Kieran Holdbrook (5th) 400m Individual Medley

Nathan Young, Shiona McClafferty & Lucy Sharp qualified for the semifinals in the 50m freestyle but due to a 2 swimmer rule progressing to finals Lucy missed out as Danielle had also already qualified. While not making a final or winning a medal, Sam Merritt, Matthew Oaten, Lucy Sharp and Ciara Tappenden all swam personal bests in their individual events. Overall team set a total of 43 personal best times and 11 British records which includes 3 British records in the relays.

Danielle Joyce had an outstanding competition and was the most successful DeaflympicsGB athlete of the games. Due to her performance she was selected to carry the GB flag at the closing ceremony which unfortunately due to organizational issues the GB team were unable to attend. In the pool Danii just missed out on the World records held by Ukraine’s Ganna Lytvenenko in the 50m freestyle by 0.13 seconds & 0.55 in the 100m in which she won by half a second as she broke her own British records. She also picked up a bronze and another GB record in the 50 Backstroke and she was denied a strong medal chance in the 100 backstroke finishing 4th having only had 7 minutes to recover for the final after her 50 Freestyle semifinal.

Jack McComish, another fantastic inspiration to younger swimmers also struck gold as he smashed his British record in the 100m Breaststroke event swimming 1.04.11 to win a thrilling final by 0.04 seconds and just miss out on Terence Parkin’s Deaflympics record of 1.03.5. Jack also broke his British records in the 50m (bronze), 200m Breaststroke (bronze), and 50m Freestyle.

Oliver Kenny had impressive performances in both the 50 fly & 50 back setting GB records in both and also added the English 200 I.M. record on his way to one of the 3 finals he made.

Nathan Young completed the individual records with a new English record for his 50 Freestyle as he reached the semifinals.

In the mixed 4x100 freestyle relay the team smashed 8.01 seconds off the British record and achieved a fantastic time of 4.49.00. Having six swimmers in two different relay teams in heats and finals all got presented with bronze medal. Unfortunately a coaching miscalculation in the team selection for the 4 x 100 mixed medley relay meant the team narrowly missed out on reaching the final finishing 9th.

The boys relay teams broke British records in both 4x100m Freestyle and 4x100 Medley relay. In the medley relay the boys smashed 5.54 seconds off the old British record from world championship in Portugal 2011 and came 5th in the final. In 4x100 m freestyle relay Jack McComish, Kieran Holdbrook, Tom Baxter and Nathan Young all swam under 58 seconds and achieved 7th place in the final.

Overall a successful performance from the team and all the staff involved. The team achieved 43 personal bests and made 13 individual finals & 6 relay finals. In the medals table for swimming Great Britain came 5th for total number of medals and ranked 6th out of 37 countries. This is huge improvement compared to last Deaflympics. Credit to all the swimmers for their dedication to training to compete at this event. The swimmers were faced with a lot of challenging situations during the time in Turkey which they coped with very well. Focusing on the positives, all the medals, records, personal bests achieved by the team has shown me they can set the bar high to compete at Deaflympics level. I look forwards to planning for the Europeans in Poland next year and I am confident the team will rise to the next challenge.

I want to say massive thank you to Christof Niklaus (Chef de mission), central team, Mel Davis and Amanda Pitkethly for your passionate support. All credit for the hard work organizing kit, meals, transport also for dealing with difficult situations around food and accommodation. Without them the team would have not been as successful, and to say I am proud the swimmers achievements and their commitment and thank you to their parents for their support.

Sam Chamberlain