

# 1990-1991

## Hans' Blog

I can honestly say that, I have never been through a world pandemic. However, I have had similar experience. In 1990-91, we were unable to train in our own pool for over 6 months and even when we did get in it wasn't exactly perfect conditions.

We were told in the spring of 1990 that the Wayne Gretzky pool would be undergoing some renovations and as a result we would not be able to train there from the beginning of July until approximately October. Considering that the swimmers who needed to train in July were Provincial, Eastern and Senior National swimmers that didn't seem like an onerous task to keep them in some water. Not a large number, but considerable nonetheless. Probably a total of about 40. Given that, we set out to find pool time for those swimmers. That summer, we became sort of a travelling swim club, hopping from pool to pool, often travelling as much as an hour to get some pool space, often sharing with other clubs. We did get some regular space, down the road in Ancaster, where they had an underused outdoor pool. We actually traded some old lane lines for pool space that summer. Combined with the space we scrounged elsewhere, we made out pretty well.

However, in September, we found out that the pool might not be ready for the start of October after all. Therefore, we set out to find as much pool time as we could, but now, it was for the entire club not just the elite swimmers and since the kids were all back at school, pool space was not as easy to come by. We managed to rent space at W.R MacDonald school, which had a 25 yard pool and some availability in early mornings for us and the pool in Ancaster which was happy to rent us some early morning time as well on Saturday and Sunday. As the weeks passed we came to the realization that our home pool would not be ready in November either.

We finally made it back in WGSC during the Christmas holidays. There was a catch though, since they were still renovating, there would be no change rooms available ( sound familiar ) and the pool temperature was a bit chilly, around 22 degrees. The air temperature was around 10! We overcame the changeroom problem by using a storage room ( for the girls ) and the maintenance guy built a few walls for the boys. We were given a hose that served as a shower. ( public health deemed we needed running water to allow the pool to be used! ) The temperature problem was a non-factor for most, but one boy who had very little body fat had to resort to a wet suit to withstand the cold.

Most of our groups had very little pool time, so how did we do it. For the most part we maximized the pool use as much as possible. Higher levels of athletes were given some preference, but they were usually also the ones that had to travel further to get to workouts.

Most groups training time was severely curtailed. One thing we did more of was dryland. Several nights a week, we met at WRMS and used their fields to do our dryland session, after which we usually played touch football or soccer until the sun started to go down at which time everyone went home. Most of all, the swimmers had a lot of fun and exposed and developed some of their alternate athletic skills, while staying in touch with all their swimming team mates. The energy, enthusiasm and camaraderie carried over into the rest of that season and beyond. By February, the pool opened, officially and everything was back to normal.

Now the big question, how did we perform?

Better than ever before! It was actually quite astounding. Despite the layoff, we set dozens of club records, some of which still stand today, had one of the best Provincial meets ever and placed 3 swimmers on the Pan Pacific team as well as one swimmer on the National Youth team.

Why and what else did we learn about.

- For sure, one of the things we found out was that good swimmers will find a way through anything.
- Carpooling to other cities to train helps people bond as a team
- Swimmers need to be with their team-mates as much as they need to train.
- Learning and practicing new skills can be a good thing.
- Skill will never leave you, this is the foundation you build upon!
- Through great challenges, athletes, coaches and club developed some outstanding resilience.
- Focus was on goals despite inconveniences

What can we learn now and how can we apply it?

- We learn what we miss the most
- Skills are still the foundation
- ZOOM is a great way to get and stay in touch with others
- Increased effort on dryland and strength will come in handy later
- Positivity is the Key
- Resilience and Perseverance
- Practices need to be purposeful and rewarding

Most of all, I am looking forward to the coming season like no other. I believe that we can accomplish some great things in the next year or two. Other clubs have been in the same position as we have been, but, I think we have handled it better than most. We will all look forward to seeing our team mates again and getting back into the water and training. There will be quite a few changes, but none too severe. Practices will have a new look, one group at a time, but that means we have more space in the water! Dryland will be outdoors, which I think is a good thing! Coaches will have Zoom meetings with swimmers allowing for a better understanding of what we are trying to accomplish each week. There won't be any meets, at

least not the type we have been used to for a while, but that will allow us to focus on practice. We will be doing increased monitoring of workout progress so that swimmers can tell how much they have been improving without the meets. I promise that by the time you do get to a meet you will be raring to go and ready to swim fast again. I am also excited about our webinars, which will cover a vast array of topics that will be of interest to swimmers and parents.

One day we will all be able to look back on this experience with reverence and perhaps even fondness. It might be the year that you break through and learn how to become great swimmers. No Matter what happens in our World, we will always protect, share and maintain our values as we move forward. These values will be our greatest asset in the World!  
See you in the pool....

Hans