

## 1 EARLY DAYS

I remember there used to be a few times when I just didn't want to do it any more. I got bored with it when I was little. My mum used to say, "Well, I've paid for the month. If at the end of the month if you want to stop we'll stop" Any way the end of the month used to come and by that time, I used to love it. So we just carried on and from there we moved house through my dad's job in the Army – moved up to Berkshire, because he was based at Sand Hurst. I used to do a lot of training there, did my first early morning sessions there.

No one actually picked me up, it was more – me, my mum and dad always thought I could do it. We looked around when we came to Ipswich and saw where the best club was and we saw Dave Champion as a coach and we looked him up and saw he had coached Karen Pickering and Zoë Cray and thought well that's the place to go if we want to follow the dream. Just from there I got better and better, achieved my National times and then my National Finals and National medals.

To be honest the occasion that stands out for me is the one when I was about nine or ten. I used to be friends with my god mums son and I remember him beating me once – 25 metres back stroke. That stands out because mum and dad always remind me of it because he then gave up swimming when he was about 10 or 11, but they still remind me saying, "Remember Jackson beat you!"

One of the best memories for me is when I got my first National time at about the age of 12 - which now seems like a small achievement but at the time I thought it was the best thing in the world.

## 2 TRAINING

Training starts on Sunday night when I go to bed, which is 8.30. The alarm goes off at 4.20. Get up. Have a little something to eat. Get in the car. Get to swimming around 5.00. I do my warm up on the side, just to get the blood flowing. Always got to do press-ups before we get in or Dave doesn't let us in! We'll warm up in the pool, maybe if we have a speed set we'll do some sprints in the warm up. The one we did on Monday night was a tough one! We had six 50's – so that's two lengths of the pool off a one-minute rest. Each of those 50's had to be maximum effort – within 3 seconds of your best time. That might sound OK. Three seconds – I can do that but when you do your best time you're in your racing gear, hat, goggles and "in the zone". In training you're not going from a dive either. After those reps you'll have a 200 metre easy. You'll then do that four times all the way through!

The last training one that stands out in my mind is we had ten 400 metres, so that's 16 lengths with 5 30 seconds rest. That means every 100 has to be completed in about 1 min seconds if I wanted to take a 30 seconds rest. And with that we alternated with a medley – that's 100 butterfly, 100 backstroke, 100-breast stroke and 100 free style. So that was through five times to make up the ten times 400 metres. Breaststroke is the one that I've medalled in at Nationals whereas the other strokes, I haven't but best event would be the 200m medley – which is all four strokes – 50 metres of each

I train till 7.00 in the morning and then stay at the pool, have some breakfast there and then catch the bus off to sixth form. Stay there for the day, come home, catch the bus back to the

pool on the Monday and work out from 4.30 to 6.15 then back home, tea and then bed at 8.30. Then up the next morning – Tuesday - same thing. On Wednesday it differs slightly – I don't swim in the evening but when I come back from school I'll get off to the gym. Do some weight training and then come back and do core stability work, strengthening conditioning work. The same routine on Thursday and Friday. If I can last any longer on Friday night I might stay up but 9.30 is usually my limit!

The thing is with a swimmers diet, you don't eat three meals a day you eat between 6 and 8 and you seem to eat all the time, obviously eating the right things. I have protein shakes in the morning and evening after training – it's called the golden hour after training, you have to make sure you have enough within that golden hour. to replenish myself.

### 3 SELECTION

If you are swimming well and are the fastest in your stroke in your County then you'll get picked for that reason. But there are no Regional competitions as such – there's not an East region team for example. All big selections get taken from the trials in March – April, that's the big meet in the swimmers calendar. For last year to get onto the World Class Development times, there were cut times you had to make to get onto the programme. Also for European Juniors, last year they took a bigger squad – they took four swimmers per event. If two swimmers made the time, they took four. If one made it they took three. So last year I was the second fastest swimmer and I also got the times so I was on the plane!

This year in the trials, they cut the team down for European Juniors and weren't taking as many so it was more off times and how you performed at the trial. I was 3 100ths off the time but only three other boys got the time- they were hard times this year, if you didn't get the time they ranked you. There were two parts – section A and B. So the ones that made the time, and won their events in A and then the ones that didn't were put in B. The B part got ranked off FINA points. Each stroke has a world record and that's 1000 FINA points. So for example if a 100 metre freestyle record is one minute and I went 1 minute 1 second I'd get maybe 950 FINA points.

At the Prague 2009 European Junior championships, I was looking at all these guys – these big Russians – these guys are never 17 or 18, surely not, they were massive. I thought I've got to race these guys, they've got beards! I was just looking and taking in all my surroundings and probably a bit star struck by it all really. I didn't swim as well as I would have liked. I was first reserve for the semi-final but no one dropped out, I didn't get in so came home quite disappointed but more motivated in a way because it gave me something to aim for. I didn't want to go back the next year and be the first reserve again because I came back and some of my friends had made finals. I didn't want to be the guy that's coming back with nothing; I want to come back with a medal. So it's really given me more of a drive this year.

I know I'd done all the work, so there's nothing I can change within training. I was just nervous at Juniors so I thought I'll go to Nationals and I'll prove myself. So I swam my first event, came third in that so I was quite happy because it was unexpected. Then came the day of the 200 medley. I swam the heats in the morning comfortably into the semi-finals and then swam the semis and got into the final. I went in the final ranked fourth or fifth but my PB placed me second. Before I went off into the race, Dave said to me "Just remember I've hurt you more than their coaches have hurt their swimmers! Just remember that". And that

was what I was thinking down the last length. I thought “ I’ve hurt more than these guys, I want it more.” I won by five 100ths of a second. A small margin, all on the finish. Down that last length that was all I was thinking “I’ve hurt more, I want it more.”

## **4 THE GAMES**

## **5 FUNDING**

Last year I got - what to me – was my big wedge of funding. I got £2000 off British Swimming because I made the World Class Development Team. So all swimmers on that get £2000, which is the bottom rung. The faster you swim, the more money you can then get. But really mum and dad used to fund it all. Hotel bills, food bills – the big one and petrol as well. I used to get grants off Essex when I lived in Colchester and when we moved to Suffolk, I got £500 from them. And now, through Suffolk Sports Aid with Adam Baker I get £1500 for being a young sport ambassador within Suffolk. I get the money but give straight back to mum and dad. If we worked it in terms of debt, I’d owe them a lot of money. But it’s not like that, they don’t say you’ve got to give me the money it’s just because it helps. I mean, they need it – after all, they pay the bills, I don’t pay any!

All athletes are always going to be needing money. Because the money that’s there has to be stretched it’s quite hard for them to fund all clubs. At the minute, the club at Ipswich do struggle financially, always looking for ways to bring money into the club. I know Ipswich rely heavily on volunteers, people on the committee – all volunteers. Obviously Dave, as a coach, gets paid along with others who help out at pool side – that all comes from squad fees and, for example, when we hold competitions the revenue from that goes straight back into the club to pay training and coaching fees.

## **6 LONDON 2012**

My main motivator is a poster I have in my bedroom that says “Lewis Aims for Olympic dream”. It was in the Bury times, where I used to live. They’d followed a story of me and that was the billboard. My grandpa got hold of that and posted it back up to me. I look up to that in the morning when the alarm goes off and I think of what it was like when I made the team last year. That feeling of I’ve made it, I’m on the plane. Winning, I like that feeling – it motivates me!

Since I was little and started getting good at swimming, the Olympics kept cropping up and I used to watch it on TV but I didn’t know much about it until I got that much older. I started seeing more of it and thinking what a great event that is. When I got higher up in the ranks of the swimming world, I know people who have made the Olympic team. See people at the trails make the Olympic team. See their faces and think ... and then London got the Games.

Obviously it’s a home game so everyone is gunning to make. It’s just going to be fantastic. Brilliant to be able to swim in front of a home crowd, family would be there, friends –

everyone I could think of could be there. It's exciting really – the prospect is there and it's in my era. It doesn't come around very often – a home Olympic Games! It's just I'm in that right age group.