

'WE ARE QUIETLY CONFIDENT', SAYS CITY OF SHEFFIELD CHIEF

# Steel City six to make a splash

There must be something special in the water at Ponds Forge International Sports Centre.

The City of Sheffield swim squad will be sending its biggest ever team to the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games which gets underway next Wednesday, and runs until August 3. A total of six Sheffield-based swimmers have qualified: Rebecca Turner, Ellie Faulkner, Lewis Coleman, Nick Grainger, Max Litchfield and Gareth Mills. And Grass Roots writer **Ruth Dacey** caught up with head coach Russ Barber, pictured above,



to discuss his hopes for the squad's performance in Scotland.

**Did the club expect so many of the swimmers to qualify for the Commonwealth Games?**

I always had hopes but undoubtedly we have exceeded expectations as a local club. It is an even more exceptional considering we are independent - so even though we are on the high performance ladder, and receive some financial support ultimately we have to raise our own funds.

There are only three or four clubs left in the country like this that perform at the highest level.

**What advantage does it give the swimmers to be competing in Glasgow?**

The casual sports fan probably doesn't realise that a medal can be won and lost on the practicalities. For example travel arrangements, how comfortable the bed is, what the nutrition is like in the village. At the last games conditions in Delhi were absolutely horrific.

It's a developing nation, so perhaps they didn't have the same experience about running major events - and little things we take for granted perhaps weren't ticked off. It was a massive learning curve that we all learnt from. Glasgow is completely different and the fact that we are only three hours away will make a huge difference. Just think about the Australian team, having to fly for so long and then the jet lag and other factors.

**How well do you expect the squad to perform and who in particular will be the 'ones to watch'?**

We are quietly confident as we have a much stronger squad than we did at the London Olympics, where only Becky and Ellie competed for us.

Preparation has vastly improved this time and we are ready to face the competition partly due to a new management team and Bill Furniss (Rebecca Adlington's former



The six City of Sheffield swimmers who will compete at the Commonwealth Games, pictured with coach Russ Barber (right)

coach) taking over as head of British Swimming.

Of course I'll be watching all six but Becky and Ellie are likely to be the ones to watch because they have already had the experience.

Both have performed at the highest level so they are extremely focused and know what they need to do to control the nerves.

It's different for the other four guys because it's their first senior international and because of that they will be very excited and giddy no doubt.

Hopefully they will be able to control that but ultimately you never know how the cards are going to drop.

**How important is it that the swimmers perform well at the Games?**

The most important target and focus for these guys is the Olympic Games which comes in the four year cycle and along the way there are stepping stones to measure how you are doing. Glasgow is one of those and is vital because it's bang, smack in the middle.

As a squad we want to have success in Brazil and I'm hoping Glasgow will give these swimmers an even bigger incentive and goal because there are individuals in the squad who will be aiming to win a medal at the next Olympics and are capable.

**Is Sheffield doing enough to help support and encourage swimming within the city?**

If money was no object then I do think more should be done, but it's exactly the same with Don Valley stadium - the funds just aren't there.

Before we went independently we were supported massively by the council for over 20 years and the only reason they had to pull out was the financial climate that we are currently in.

There are restraints so we make the most of what we have but luckily we there are fantastic facilities at Ponds Forge and SIV really support us. If it's going to get any bet-

ter though someone need to put their hand in their pocket - but right now no-one seems to have money in their pocket.

Even if we perform well in Glasgow I don't think anything will change financially. And at the end of the day there are bins to be emptied, street lights to be fixed and pot holes to be fixed.

The only way that a difference can be made is if people pay more taxes and maybe they should be given the choice of pay less and see local sports struggling or more taxes and support local sport.

■ See the Sheffield Star, in print and online, for all the latest from the Games.

## PROFILE OF SHEFFIELD'S SIX FOR GLASGOW

Compiled by Ruth Dacey



**Rebecca Turner**

**D.O.B:** 01/08/1992

**Place of birth:** Rotherham

**Qualified in:** 100m/200m/400m frees and 4x100m/4x200m relay

**Career Highlight:** Winning Olympic trials for London 2012

**Interesting Fact:** Obsessed with cereal



**Ellie Faulkner**

**D.O.B:** 05/01/1993

**Place of birth:** Sheffield

**Qualified in:** 200m/400m/800m frees and the 4x200m relay

**Career Highlight:** Qualifying for the London Olympics 2012

**Interesting Fact:** Right leg is longer than her left



**Lewis Coleman**

**D.O.B:** 11/04/1992

**Place of birth:** Peterborough

**Qualified in:** 200m free/200m medley and 4x200m freestyle relay

**Career Highlight:** Qualifying for the Commonwealth Games

**Interesting Fact:** Ambassador for Leukaemia/Lymphoma Research



**Nick Grainger**

**D.O.B:** 03/10/1994

**Place of birth:** Rotherham

**Qualified in:** 200m/400m free and 4x200m freestyle relay

**Career Highlight:** Qualifying for the Commonwealth Games

**Interesting Fact:** Tallest member of the squad at 6ft 5in



**Max Litchfield**

**D.O.B:** 04/03/1994

**Qualified in:** 400m medley and 4x200m freestyle relay

**Career Highlight:** Gold medal in 4x200m freestyle relay at Dubai World Junior Championships

**Interesting Fact:** Favourite film is Anchorman



**Gareth Mills**

**D.O.B:** 01/04/1993

**Place of Birth:** Scarborough

**Qualified in:** 4x200m freestyle relay

**Career Highlight:** Gold medal at 2011 European Junior Championship.

**Interesting Fact:** Youngest of four boys, who are all swimmers.