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# Beneath the surface synchro swim club has a lot to offer

**RANDY NORRIS**

(Mar 25, 2006)

There are some sports that immediately come to mind while others are slightly more unusual. They offer the same lessons and challenges, only in a different format.

Last week I looked below the surface of the Guelph Synchronized Swim Club and was entranced by what I found. The artistry, commitment and effort of these athletes is impressive.

At the pool, I watched a group of female athletes showing the results of dedicated practice. To the beat of popular music, they demonstrated moves that most of us could only dream about doing.

Think about treading water which most of us did during childhood swimming lessons. Imagine being asked to tread water and to rise above the surface as far as you could. While you are doing this, you should also do a pirouette. Don't forget to smile.

I also watched some of the girls treading water upside down and lifting their legs out of the water as far as possible. Of course, being upside down, they didn't have to smile. That would make it so much easier for me if I didn't have to smile.

I'm sure I could tread water with my head above the surface and I'm pretty sure I could smile for a while but anything else would be impossible. These kids are athletes and their chosen sport is strenuous and requires both skill and effort.

I asked 11-year-old Emily why she chose this sport. She told me that she liked dancing and swimming and the club allowed her to do both. "It was great."

Nora Power, the president of the Club, told me that registration for the summer recreational program was underway and that the 10-week program would cost \$120. Swimmers, of any age, can start as long as they can swim back and forth



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across the width of the pool and put their head underwater.

Power told me that it was a great sport and that it didn't focus on offence and defence like some other programs. It's true that all kids don't thrive in that type of atmosphere but that doesn't mean that the club doesn't offer competitive programs. I saw swimmers from both the recreational and competitive programs and I'm told that there is even an adult program.

I was impressed by the support that the crowd and the other swimmers gave those performing in the pool. Every time a head came up out of the water, the other swimmers and the crowd let the swimmer know that their efforts were appreciated. No one was too embarrassed to hoot or holler since the swimmer was trying her best.

If what I saw at the pool is any indication of the type of programs that this club offers, the club should be proud. The grace and beauty of this sport is impressive and at the same time, it can captivate anyone's artistic and athletic sense.

Power and I talked about the benefits of the sport which are considerable. Incredible stamina and physical fitness are required to perform at the upper levels of competition. Training can range at the beginning level from a couple of times a week to the top level when the swimmer practises four times per week for a total of 15 hours per week.

Like all dedicated athletes, these kids have to learn how to keep a balance with their academic and personal pursuits. Power reports that many of the competitive swimmers have done quite well academically.

With an artistic flair, these kids demonstrate with tilt of the head and a wave of the hand, the best that minor sports can offer. Don't just scratch the surface of this sport; it has a lot to offer.

Randy Norris is an active community sports volunteer and the supportive dad of three competitive kids. His column appears every week. He can be reached at <mailto:rnorris@sentex.net>



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