Planet Phoenix

PHOENIX TOP CLUB FOR 6TH TIME

AND SMASHING THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Welcome Back

Welcome to the August edition of the Phoenix Aquatics Club Newsletter!

It's been a busy few months for our swimmers, coaches, families and supporters, with plenty to celebrate both in and out of the pool. From big international meets to school championships, club events and some exciting new milestones, there's a lot to catch up on!

In this edition, we look back on the Commonwealth Games and Pan Pacific Championships, celebrate our swimmers who competed at Swim fest Oceania Championships, and share some highlights from our Club Awards Night.





We're also excited to reconise our new club record holders, hear from Hope Wang in our latest swimmer interview, and sit down with Bridget, one of our Junior Phoenix coaches, to find out more about her swimming journey and coaching experience.

As always, thank you to our swimmers, coaches, parents, volunteers and supporters who make Phoenix such a great club to be part of. There have been some fantastic achievements recently, but it's the everyday commitment, encouragement and team spirit that continues to make our club special.

So, grab a coffee, settle in and have a read there's plenty to celebrate!



SWIM FEST 6 YEARS AT THE TOP!

What a fantastic Swim Fest it was for our club! Our swimmers turned up ready to race, support one another and represent the club with plenty of pride and the results certainly reflected the hard work being put in across all our squads
.
There were some fantastic performances throughout the meet, with swimmers from across the age groups accumulating valuable points across their events and helping contribute to another outstanding team result.

In the 13-year-old girls overall points standings, Kathryn Bates took out 1st place, with Olivia Xu finishing a fantastic 2nd.

In the younger age groups, Helton Hou claimed 1st place in the Under 8 boys overall points, while Jiliang Zhang and Zechary Lee finished 2nd and 3rd respectively in the 9–10-year-old boys overall standings.

The 13-year-old boys saw Lucas Wang take 1st place overall, while James Zhang finished 1st in the 14-year-old boys. In the 15-year-old boys, Michael Yang also claimed 1st place overall, while Bruce Shen finished an excellent 3rd in the 17-year-old boys.





For the sixth year in a row, our club finished 1st overall in the Swim Fest points!

Six consecutive years at the top is an incredible achievement and a fantastic reflection of the depth, talent and team spirit across our club. It takes every swimmer contributing points across the age groups, teammates cheering each other on, and the support of our coaches, families and volunteers.

A huge congratulations to all of our swimmers who competed at Swim Fest. Every swim and every point contributed to another memorable team victory.



Support Your Club!

Like many others within our community, we continue to face rising costs due to the current economic climate, inflation, and lasting effects of COVID. Phoenix Aquatics relies on the generosity of our community to help cover our significant annual operating costs. We are always grateful for partners and donations that help us keep delivering high quality programmes for our swimmers.

If you're interested in becoming a **partner**, please contact phoenixaquatics.secretary@gmail.com for further information.
If you would like to make a **donation**, contributions can be made using the details below:
Bank account: 06-0998-0894043-00
Payee: Phoenix Aquatics Inc
Reference: Donation
Thank you to all members for your ongoing support - GO PHOENIX!

PHOENIX SWIMMERS SHINE AT OCEANIA CHAMPIONSHIPS

It was a fantastic week for Phoenix Aquatics at the 2026 Oceania Swimming Championships in Suva, Fiji, with Hope Wang, Jade Lyles, Jasmine Lyles and Holly Neville proudly representing New Zealand on the international stage.

Hope Wang had an outstanding championships, producing three individual silver-medal performances across a demanding programme. She finished second in the 400m Individual Medley in 5:12.00, before adding silver medals in the 400m Freestyle (4:33.28) and 800m Freestyle (9:19.03).

Hope also contributed to New Zealand's bronze-medal-winning 4×200m Freestyle Relay, swimming alongside Jasmine Lyles, Lily McGrath and Kiri Yamagami in a time of 8:53.64.
That gave Hope an impressive three individual silver medals and a relay bronze across the championships.

Jade Lyles was another standout performer, taking home an Oceania title in the Women's 200m Backstroke. Jade powered to gold in 2:20.98, while also claiming bronze in the 100m Backstroke in 1:04.99.

Jade was also an important member of New Zealand's relay teams. She helped the women's 4×100m Freestyle Relay team of Holly Neville, Kiri Yamagami and Stacey Morgan to gold in 3:54.18, and contributed to the bronze-medal-winning Mixed 4×100m Freestyle Relay alongside Sam Skidmore, Holly Neville and William Tye.

Jasmine Lyles also made her mark on the New Zealand team, competing across the breaststroke and individual medley events at the championships.

One of her highlights came in the Women's 4×200m Freestyle Relay, where Jasmine joined Hope Wang, Lily McGrath and Kiri Yamagami to secure bronze for New Zealand in 8:53.64.

It was a great opportunity for Jasmine to gain valuable international racing experience and contribute to the team's medal-winning performances.

Holly Neville enjoyed a particularly successful championships, finishing with three relay medals.
Holly was part of the New Zealand women's 4×100m Freestyle Relay team alongside Jade Lyles, Kiri Yamagami and Stacey Morgan, powering to gold in 3:54.18.

She then added two bronze medals, helping New Zealand to third place in both the Mixed 4×50m Freestyle Relay and Mixed 4×100m Freestyle Relay. Holly teamed up with Sam Skidmore, Mackenzie Tobin and Roman Anderson in the 4×50m, before joining Sam Skidmore, Jade Lyles and William Tye in the 4×100m.

It was a fantastic opportunity for all four swimmers to represent New Zealand and race alongside some of the best swimmers from across Oceania. Between them, Hope, Jade, Jasmine and Holly contributed to a number of New Zealand's medal-winning performances, with Jade claiming an individual Oceania title, Hope producing three individual silver-medal swims, and all four playing a role in successful relay teams.

Congratulations to all four swimmers on an excellent championships and a very proud achievement for Phoenix Aquatics!



DIVING INTO AQUATIC MANGAER & LEAD COACH FOR JUNIOR PHOENIX BRIDGET MAHER

For Bridget Maher, coaching has been a part of her life for much longer than she ever expected. What started as a teenage swimmer stepping in to help out her club has grown into a career built around helping swimmers become better, both in and out of the pool.

Bridget's interest in swimming started with a simple desire to improve. Even as a school-aged swimmer, she would get books out from the library to learn more about the sport and find ways to become a better swimmer.

Then, at around 15 years old, an opportunity came along that would give her an early taste of coaching.

A coach who was responsible for the group below Bridget was unable to get to the pool a couple of days a week, so Bridget stepped up to volunteer and take the group herself.

There was, however, another slightly less noble motivation behind her decision.

"It got me out of our pretty intense run that we had to do as a squad before we got in twice a week," Bridget admits. "There was a reason I swam it wasn't my run ability!"

What began as helping out soon developed into a genuine passion for coaching. Today, Bridget loves that no two swimmers, or even two days, are the same.

"It's always about people," she says. "It's different each day, each group you take, as not all people are the same, so getting results can take different approaches for each person."

For Bridget, coaching isn't simply about writing a programme and watching swimmers complete the sets. It is about understanding the individual behind the swimmer and working out what approach will help them progress.

And when it comes to improving in swimming, Bridget believes one of the most important lessons is also one of the simplest: show up.

"You can get a long way with showing up consistently. You don't need to be at your best every day, but putting together small wins each day – and sometimes that's as simple as being there."

It is a philosophy that has clearly stayed with Bridget throughout her own swimming and coaching journey. She also believes swimmers should learn to celebrate those small wins, something she wishes she had understood earlier in her own career.



"If I could give my younger swimming self one piece of advice, it would be to celebrate your wins more," she says. "PBs, big or small, don't come around too often the older and further into the sport you get. It's okay to be happy with your results, however big or small they are."

Bridget has been part of Phoenix since the club's early days, giving her a unique perspective on just how far the club has come.

When asked about her favourite memory from coaching, she doesn't point to one particular race or result. Instead, it is watching the club itself grow that means the most.

"There are a lot of great results we as a club have had, though not all results are directly from you as a person," she explains. "It's so nice to be part of a young club and to see the success we consistently create from our humble beginnings."

Having been there from the start, Bridget has watched Phoenix develop from its early beginnings into the club it is today – and she considers that journey itself one of her favourite memories.

Bridget has also been fortunate to learn from a number of people throughout her time in swimming, sport and fitness.

DIVING INTO AQUATIC MANGAER & LEAD COACH FOR JUNIOR PHOENIX BRIDGET MAHER

She makes a point of surrounding herself with people who are good at what they do and learning from both their successes and their mistakes.

Two people in particular have had a lasting influence on her. The first is David, who came into Bridget's life towards the end of her swimming career and as coaching was beginning to become her career. What started almost by accident developed into an opportunity to be part of the journey of building both a business and a club.

"I have learnt many things from him and am grateful to be part of such a successful product he has created, along with some of the best skilled staff I work alongside daily."

The other is Rhys Jolly, who worked with Bridget as her personal trainer during the final years of her swimming career. Bridget admired his passion and creativity in his approach to exercise and has since joined his gym, Playground Fitness.

Both have taught Bridget the importance of appreciating the small wins, continuing to learn and always looking for ways to improve.

Away from the pool, Bridget's commitment to fitness might surprise even those who know her well.



She is currently the highest-attending member at Playground Fitness, approaching an incredible 2,000 sessions over more than six years.

There is even a treadmill badge involved. "I got a treadmill badge in Lane 8 and have a sticker on my favourite treadmill marking my 1000th class," she says.
Perhaps most ironically, this comes from someone who once actively hated running. "Now I choose it daily."

Those who work with Bridget know that midday can be a difficult time to track her down – she is usually getting her daily gym session done.

Outside of swimming and the gym,

Bridget is a big fan of island holidays, watersports and jetskis, and follows rugby and most sports closely. She is also, proudly, a member of the Tim Payne fan club and enjoys following his success.

From a teenage swimmer who volunteered to avoid running, to a coach who has helped shape Phoenix from its early days, Bridget's journey is a reminder that sometimes the opportunities we step into almost by accident can become something much bigger.

For Bridget, coaching is about people, consistency, learning and celebrating progress and after many years in the sport, she is still very much committed to getting a little better every day.

UPCOMING MEETS/EVENTS	
Auckland Short Course Champs	28-30th August
Aimes Games	5-11th September
New Zealand Short Course Champs	27th Sept - 1st Oct
400s and 50s Meet	14th November
Caro Cup	22nd Novemver

GALLERY


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farewell


awards evening
opening remarks
David
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COUNTIES READYMIX
BY HIGGINS CONCRETE


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beginning


READYMIX
HIGGINS CONCRETE







NEW CLUB RECORD HOLDERS MARCH - AUGUST 2026

NAME	
Jade Lyles	Adrian Zhao
Hope Wang	Nina Kuzmanovic
April Lin	Zechary Lee
Arissa Liu	Jiliang Zhang
Michael Yang	Brandon Holder
Samuel Lang	Bruce Zhen
Bruce Shen	Owen Li
Helton Hou	Angelina See
Olivia Xu	Liliya Wu
James Zhang	Rex Wang
Adam Ma	



Hazel Ouwehand: From Altitude Training to the Commonwealth Games and Pan Pacs

It has been a huge few months for Phoenix swimmer Hazel Ouwehand, who has spent the winter representing New Zealand on the international stage at both the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games and the Pan Pacific Championships.

Hazel's international campaign began well before she arrived at the Commonwealth Games, with an extensive three-week staging camp in Granada, Spain. While much of the New Zealand team prepared together closer to the Games, Hazel and her coach David Lyles took a slightly different approach, spending three weeks training at altitude in Granada.

"My staging camp was a lot longer than any other on the team.
I spent three weeks in Granada, Spain swimming at altitude. It was just David and I at altitude, so was a time to recuperate and get some solid training in before the next stage."

The altitude block provided an opportunity to step away from the excitement surrounding the Games, focus on training and recovery, and build towards the next phase of the campaign. From Granada, Hazel travelled to Stirling, Scotland, where she joined the rest of the New Zealand swimming team for two weeks of preparation at Stirling University.

"It was the perfect place to prepare with the team before heading to the village."

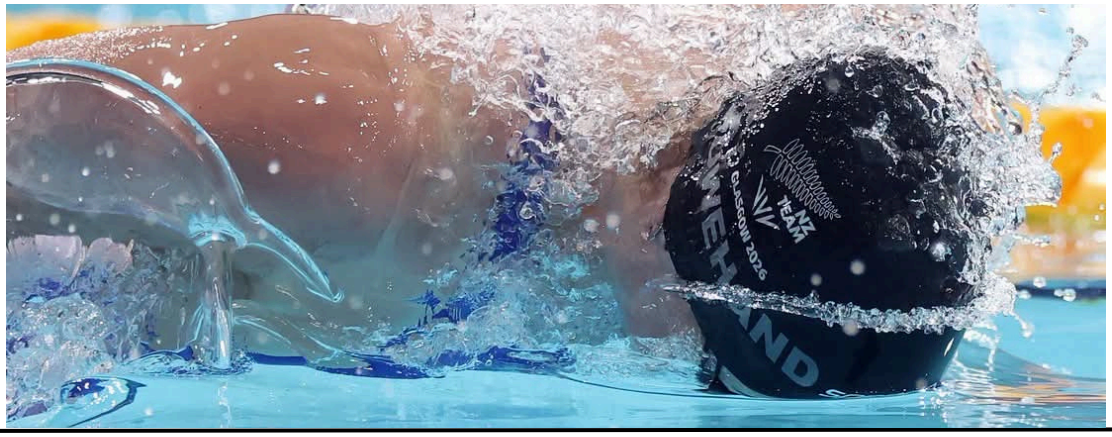
And what a team it was. The 13-strong New Zealand swimming squad included a mix of experienced international swimmers and seven athletes competing at their first Commonwealth games. With world-class athletes, returning Commonwealth medallists and some exciting young talent, the team arrived in Glasgow with plenty of momentum.

For Hazel, it was her second Commonwealth Games, having also competed in Birmingham in 2022. This time, however, she was able to make her mark on the Games in a very special way.

Hazel produced a fantastic performance in the Women's 50m butterfly, qualifying for the final and then stepping up when it mattered most. Swimming a 25.76, she secured bronze – her first Commonwealth Games medal – finishing third in a highly competitive international field.

It was an outstanding achievement and a fantastic reward for the years of work that had gone into reaching the Games. Hazel's bronze also contributed to an exceptional campaign for New Zealand swimming. The team





Hazel Ouwehand: From Altitude Training to the Commonwealth Games and Pan Pacs

finished Glasgow with 10 swimming medals – two gold, five silver and three bronze – making it New Zealand swimming's most successful Commonwealth Games medal haul to date.

Hazel also contested the 100m butterfly, progressing through to the final after a particularly impressive semi-final swim. She dropped from 1:00.33 in the heats to 58.56 in the semi-final before finishing eighth in the final.

Reflecting on her races, Hazel is characteristically measured about her performance.

There are various components of my races that upon reflection I know I could have done better."

But a Commonwealth Games bronze medal is certainly something to be proud of, and Hazel's ability to perform under the pressure of a major international final is an achievement worth celebrating.
Beyond the racing itself, Hazel also spoke highly of the experience of being part of the New Zealand team.

"It was my second Commonwealth Games and I thoroughly enjoyed myself. Glasgow did a great job putting on the Games with such last minute notice and limited resources. It was so far of the most cohesive teams I have had the pleasure of being a part of and also Swimming New Zealand's most successful Commonwealth swimming team to date."

Straight from Glasgow to Pan Pacs there was very little time for Hazel to put her feet up after the Commonwealth Games, with the Pan Pacific Championships following in a remarkably quick turnaround.

"Pan Pacs was a very quick turnaround after the Commonwealth Games, the shortest between two large international competitions that I have ever experienced."

Despite the challenge of moving from one major iternational meet straight into another, Hazel headed to Pan Pacs and once again lined up against some of the best swimmers in the world.

The competition provided another valuable international racing opportunity, this time finishing her campaign under the Californian sun.

azel finished eighth in the A final of the 100m butterfly, while also winning the B final of the 50m butterfly another strong showing on the international stage after an already demanding Commonwealth Games campaign.

For Hazel, the Pan Pacs experience was about more than simply the results.

"My races at this meet were a mixed bag, though as always, much to take away and learn from."

Whether it is a podium finish, a tough race, a new environment



Hazel Ouwehand: From Altitude Training to the Commonwealth Games and Pan Pacs





or simply another opportunity to line up against the best in the world, there is always something to take awa

What comes next?

After an enormous international season, Hazel is now taking some well-earned time away from the pool.

“I am having a long overdue break from swimming now to reset, before deciding what comes next.”

After months of altitude camps, international travel, two major competitions, a Commonwealth Games medal and countless hours of training, a break is certainly deserved.

From everyone at Phoenix Aquatics, congratulations Hazel! A Commonwealth Games bronze medal is an incredible achievement and a wonderful reflection of the dedication, commitment and hard work that goes into reaching the highest levels of our sport.

We are incredibly proud to see one of our own representing New Zealand on the world stage and even prouder to see Hazel standing on a Commonwealth Games podium. Whatever comes next, we look forward to following the journey!

On behalf of Hazel and the club we would like to thank you everyone who helped get her to Glascow and California to make Phoenix proud. Its this support that helps makes dreams happen.





Quote of the Month

"Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard."

-Tim Notke

The BIG Interview with Hope Wang

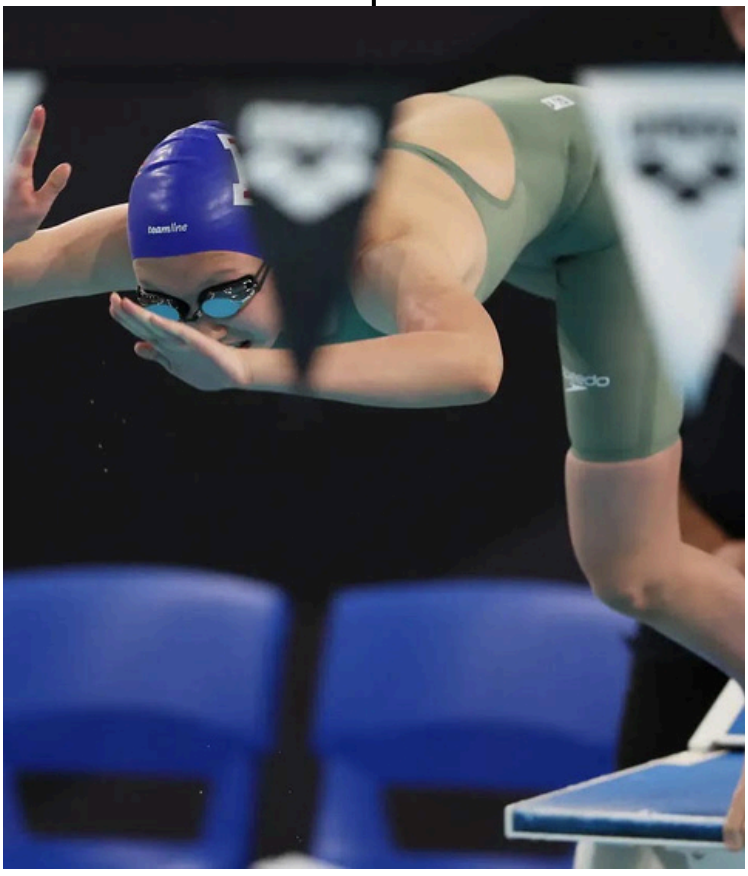
For Phoenix swimmer Hope Wang, swimming has been part of her life for almost as long as she can remember. In fact, her journey in the water began when she was just four months old, when her parents first took her along to infant swimming lessons.

Her parents believed swimming was an important life skill, and what started as a way to learn water safety soon became something much more. Hope continued with swimming lessons until she learnt to swim, quickly discovering that she loved being in the pool. It wasn't long before one of her swimming teachers encouraged her to take the next step and join a competitive swimming club.

Now, at 15, Hope has already represented New Zealand on the international stage and continues to set her sights on bigger goals.

In July 2025, Hope was selected to represent New Zealand in Team Black at the Tri-Series in Ballarat, Australia. It was her first experience representing New Zealand in swimming, competing against teams from Victoria and Western Australia.

The experience was a significant milestone, but there was more international success to come.





Earlier this year, Hope was selected to represent New Zealand at the Oceania Swimming Championships in Fiji, where she produced an impressive series of performances. She returned home with three individual silver medals in the 400m Freestyle, 400m Individual Medley and 800m Freestyle, as well as a bronze medal as part of a relay team.

"It was probably my favourite international swimming competition so far," Hope said.

Hope has also been selected to represent New Zealand at this year's Tri-Series and has been named for the New Zealand Youth Development Camp taking place in September.

Of all the events she competes in, the 400m Individual Medley holds a special place. With four different strokes making up one race, it provides both variety and challenge.

"I get to do a bit of every stroke in the race," Hope said. "I enjoy the variety and challenge of having to switch between different strokes."

While international competition has brought some incredible achievements, Hope says some of her most valued swimming experiences come from being part of Phoenix and sharing the journey with her teammates.

"I love every bit of being part of Phoenix," she said. "I love training with my friends as it's such a supportive and positive

The BIG Interview with Hope Wang

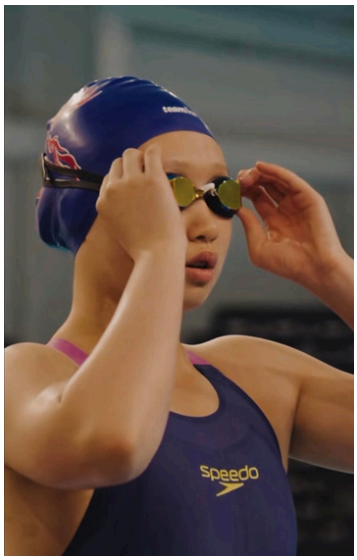
environment.

We motivate and push each other through every session, which makes training way more enjoyable, especially on the hardest sets."

For Hope, being part of a club is about much more than swimming. The friendships, support and memories created along the way are just as important as the results on the scoreboard.

"Being part of the club has not only helped me develop as a swimmer, but has given me many, many friendships and memories with my friends that I will always remember and value."

One of those memories came at this year's NAGs, when the Phoenix team won the mixed relay on the final day of competition.



It was an especially memorable achievement because the meet had been challenging, with the final day brought forward and swimmers already feeling the effects of a long competition.

Hope had another challenge to overcome too, she had just finished racing the 1500m Freestyle before stepping up for the relay.



"I was really tired, but despite this, we came together as a team and gave everything we had left," she said. "Winning as a team was really special and we were all super happy afterwards."

When it comes to inspiration, Hope looks to one of the greatest distance swimmers the sport has ever produced: Katie Ledecky. Hope has admired Ledecky since she was young, particularly for her dedication, discipline and incredible work ethic.

"Her resilience, humility and sportsmanship makes her someone I really look up to," Hope said. "She inspires me to work hard, stay positive and always strive to be a better swimmer and person I can be."

With international experience already under her belt, Hope is now working towards qualifying times for future international junior competitions, including the Junior Pan Pacific Championships.



And while swimming takes up a huge part of her life, Hope enjoys keeping things simple outside the pool. One of her favourite things to do when she isn't swimming is spending time with her friends.

From first entering a pool at just four months old to standing on an international podium for New Zealand, Hope's swimming journey has already taken her a long way. With strong friendships around her, big goals ahead and a genuine love for the sport, there is plenty more to come from this young Phoenix swimmer.

If there is anything you want to see, or if you would like to contribute something – please contact the editor (Ruby).

If you want to know more about Phoenix Aquatics check out our webpage: www.phoenixaquatics.com where, among other things, you can see our club records, hall of fame members and order your club uniform.

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