

SUPER LEAGUE – IT’S ONLY AN “ASPIRATION”, SAYS ASA

A recent presentation to the asa Technical Water Polo Committee proposing the creation of a Super League raised issues of considerable concern for both the NWWPL & NWPL.

Not only did the proposal envisage creating new “franchise teams” but that it would run in direct competition to the NWWPL & NWPL (between September and December), it also indicated that a start would be made “by 2011”. In both instances, the impact on both national leagues would have been formidable and far-reaching.

Craig Nicholson (asa Discipline Development Co-ordinator) and Norman Leighton (asa Talent Development Officer – Water Polo), who developed the Super League plan on behalf of the asa, recently invited the NWWPL to hear a presentation regarding the project.

Craig and Norman have now released this statement:

“Following meetings with key people and partners around the formation of a Super League for water polo, it is felt that this is an ‘aspiration’ for the sport to have once all the correct structures are in place.

“A result of this is that the original date indicated in the proposal to introduce the Super League by 2011 is now not considered to be feasible.

“The asa, in proposing the development of a Super League, is looking at providing additional high-quality competition for clubs and their players and, after consultation with key people and partners, the proposed Super League would complement the current national league formats.

“This will mean identifying an appropriate time in the water polo calendar – e.g. January – March.”

Craig and Norman explained that this competition relied on the development of a sufficiently large group of clubs (**pathway clubs**) that could deliver a comprehensive and sustainable training programme and in particular a significant number of elite level players: “A business model is currently being developed for a pathway club and areas are being identified around the country where potential pathway clubs could be developed, some of which may be linked with the asa Beacon programmes – for example, Crystal Palace”. The Beacon programmes are a four year investment and will not necessarily cover all four disciplines, i.e. they may not all offer water polo.

It was stressed that any club can become a pathway club, adding value to existing provision. Pathway clubs will have professional coaches and provide water polo at all levels from mini polo to high performance.

Ends