

An Evening with Olympic Swimmer, Gemma Spofforth

On the 19th December 2011, Chris Luesley, W.S.C Swimming Secretary and Teacher was fortunate enough to win a Worthing Herald Competition and attend an evening with Olympic Swimmer Gemma Spofforth, held by Spofforths Accountants.

The well structured evening was held at the Minerva Theatre in Chichester and featured Andrew Castle, former British Tennis Player and GMTV Presenter, as host of the evening. Andrew began the evening recalling stories of his Greatness (almost) in British Tennis, where he would always get into winning positions only to bottle it and crumble at the final hurdle – winning.

Andrew then introduced the star of the evening, Gemma Spofforth, originally of Bognor Regis Swimming Club, who were in attendance at the event. Gemma holds the 100 metres backstroke world record, achieved when winning Gold at the World Championships in 2009 and is hoping to compete in the London 2012 Olympics after coming 4th in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, narrowly missing out on a medal.

Andrew and Gemma discussed the hurdles that had to be overcome for her to succeed and the challenges in recent years as she approaches a home Olympics. Although home for Gemma, is now in Florida, where she trains, having been to University there. Videos were shown highlighting Gemma's performances in both the Olympics and World Championships.

After a lengthy chat with Gemma, Andrew introduced Mark Foster, former Olympic swimmer and World Record holder at 50 metres freestyle. He provided his views on how to succeed in swimming and shared his experiences of 5 Olympics and confirmed that he wasn't going for number 6 in 2012, as he is now 41.

The session ended with questions from the 200 strong audience who then applauded the 2 Olympians present at the evening. Once outside the venue, Gemma and Mark spent quality time with some of the younger swimmers present at the evening, signing all kinds of memorabilia and having photos taken (this included myself)

As a competition winner, I was privileged to attend an event relevant to myself as a swimmer with a strong interest in the Olympics. The event was also filmed by the BBC and part of the evening will be on the BBC website.



Chris and a very tall – Mark Foster



Gemma Spofforth, Andrew Castle and Mark Foster