

Bill Sweetenham's 'tough love' regime paying dividends for GB swimming

Swimming is on a high; not only with Rebecca Adlington's two Olympic gold medals, but also Jo Jackson's recent 400 metres freestyle world record.

By Brian Moore

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Do you remember the furore over the coaching methods of Aussie Bill Sweetenham a few years ago?

Brought in to reverse the disastrous decline in standards, that had made the Great Britain swimming team the butt of other athletes' jibes, some complained he was a bully. Claims were made that he had shouted at swimmers and made some of them cry.



Hard man: former GB swimming coach Bill Sweetenham was accused of bullying and not giving swimmers enough respect Photo: GETTY IMAGES

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Even experienced swimmers complained that Sweetenham had not given them enough respect, in spite of the fact that these were the same athletes that had failed.

I distinctly remember one posted comment that lectured at length as to the correct way to inspire athletes, which was to nurture and love, stress the positives and which went on to condemn Sweetenham's methods as belonging to the dark ages.

Sometimes the cosseted need a good slapping and to be told to front up or get out. There is not one way of coaching

and if an athlete isn't honest enough to stand up to harsh scrutiny it is a sure sign they will not make the top.

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