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# Hard work ahead to nourish 2008 Beijing Olympic pool of talent

"One positive step forward but one gigantic step forward required," was the view of Michael Scott, the national swimming performance director, on the British results in the pool at the Games.

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By Anita Lonsbrough in Beijing

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"But we need a brand name sponsor for the team to get behind us to take that journey," he added. "That journey is to get British swimming at a level it should be and what the public will expect in 2012."

The 21 finalists were five more than Athens and double that of Sydney. But Scott rightly says: "We need to convert a large percentage of those into podium places."

In swimming alone, Britain finished fourth on the medals table based on golds and seventh on all medals thanks to the two magnificent victories by Becky Adlington and a bronze from Jo Jackson. But it has to be remembered Team GB finished behind Zimbabwe who, with one swimmer, Kirsty Coventry, won a gold and three silvers.

Scott will not take the praise for the team's success, saying: "I've only just arrived and what we saw happen this summer is not my work, it's Bill's [Sweetenham] work.

"The cake was already baked, I've just put a bit of icing on it. Any person who does not pay tribute to Bill for the success we've had this summer and at this meet doesn't recognise where all the hard work has come from."

Sweetenham, the former performance director, said: "I can't tell you how good I feel. After a hard fight and the application of relentless intensity, Britain has earned its right to play with the big boys in world swimming.

"I cannot praise the staff or the athletes on the team enough, nor can I be more complimentary about the team effort that has enabled Britain to achieve these results and its ability and potential to move forward."

Challenging to be in contention for London 2012 is a wealth of talent. In 2001 at the European Junior Championships Britain won only three medals, of which one was gold. This time around it was 18, with 10 of them gold. There was also success at the World Youth Championships.

These youngsters are being brought up in the same professional manner that is expected of the seniors. With the inspiration that they will get from Adlington and Jackson, they will soon be challenging for team places.

The young girls in particular show great promise. Fran Halsall, Jemma Lowe and Lizzie Simmonds were all part of the 12 swimmers who Sweetenham took to Mexico to fast-track for 2012. And we can add Ellen Gandy, who missed out here due to injury.

This has been the fastest and the longest of meets. Faster because of the world records, 25 in total. The longest because of the way the heats were held at night and the finals in the morning – a schedule our swimmers coped with well because the formats of the Olympic trials and the ASA National Championships were the same. Racing often and fast, even when tired, is something they will have to learn.

Scott said: "We raced well but we have to race smarter. We have made a step forward but now we have to put the bar higher."

### British Olympic swimming

	2008	2004	2000	1996	1992
<b>Medals</b>	3	2	0	2	1
<b>Colours</b>	2G 1B	2B	-	1S 1B	1B
<b>Finalists</b>	21	16	10	8	7
<b>S/F</b>	18	13	19	N/A	N/A
<b>Records</b>					
<b>World</b>	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Olympic</b>	2	0	0	0	0
<b>European</b>	6	1	0	0	0
<b>Commonwealth</b>	3	3	0	0	1
<b>British</b>	25	8	10	5	7

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