Below the Surface

Auckland Underwater Hockey Community Update — June 2026

Kia ora Auckland Underwater Hockey Community,

As we cruise into the colder months, the action in the pool is heating up! We have an incredibly exciting year ahead with the Age Group World Championships only 6 weeks away. This is the perfect time to provide an update on everything happening across Auckland. Plus, don't miss our very first player profile in our “Between Breaths” column at the end of the article.

Meet the 2026 Committee & Leadership Team

We are pleased to introduce the Auckland Underwater Hockey Committee and leadership team for 2026. These dedicated volunteers manage our portfolios, regional competitions, and athlete pathways:

Portfolio / Role	Personnel	Key Responsibilities
President	Matt Hart	Overall governance and strategic direction.
Secretary & Privacy Officer	Cameron Boyce	Overseeing policy development
Treasurer & Child Safeguarding	Winnie Sowerby	Leading finance, budgeting, and safeguarding policy development.
Schools UWH Officer	Sheryl Wu	Managing school & intermediate Comps
Competitions Officer	Sam Marshall	Overseeing senior local leagues and tournament structures.
Mini League (Grow Our Sport)	Matt Hart	Junior recruitment and grassroots development initiatives.
High-Performance	Logan Stevenson	Elite athlete pathways and regional representative selections.
Women’s Development	Liv Coulter	Driving female participation and pathways across all grades.
Coaching & Athlete Pathways	Heath Galloway	Coaching development, mentoring, and structured training modules.
Referees & Equipment	Nathan Marshall	Rule enforcement, official clinics, and kit management.
Public Awareness & Social Media	Charlotte O’Connor & Flynn Lakeman	Driving public visibility via new Facebook and Instagram channels and website maintenance
Sponsorship & Fundraising	Lina Montero Soto	Securing commercial partners and running community grant funding.
Pool Bookings	Tyler de Vries	Liaising with aquatic centers and managing booking schedules.

What's Been Happening — Mid-Year Highlights

Wednesday Night League: Term 2 Record Breaker!

Where: Westwave Aquatic Centre | When: Wednesdays, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

We started a journey in Q4 of 2024 to rapidly grow our Wednesday night Westwave competition, ensuring it remains financially self-sustaining while providing an accessible development pathway for our junior players.

The league is an absolute triumph! For Term 2, we have officially smashed all previous records by hitting over 100 active sign-ups! The energy, pace, and competitive depth on Wednesday nights is a fantastic testament to the thriving state of club-level underwater hockey in Auckland right now.

A massive shoutout to everyone involved in making this league run seamlessly, with a particular mention to **Sheryl Wu, Sam Marshall, and Heath Galloway** for consistently delivering a top-tier competition. Let's keep that momentum rolling into Term 3! Keep an eye on our Facebook page for upcoming registration details.

King's Birthday Tournament (North Islands) — Rotorua

The King's Birthday Weekend saw spectacular elite action at the North Island Competition in Rotorua (May 30 – June 1). Auckland was incredibly well represented, with three of our local powerhouses—Pakuranga, GI Joes, and Nova—sending multiple squads to battle it out across the grades. This year's tournament featured fierce depth across the traditional divisions, along with the highly anticipated debut of the newly introduced Women's Grade!

Tournament Results Breakdown for our Auckland Clubs

Grade	Placing	Club / Team
Women's Grade (8 teams competed)	🥇 Gold 🥉 Bronze 4th Place 6th Place 8th Place	Kitana (Nova) Makoettes (Pakuranga) Me'Shell Jones (GI Joes) Shakira (Pakuranga) Karai (Nova)
A Grade (9 teams competed)	🥇 Gold 🥉 Bronze 5th Place 6th Place 7th Place	Lazer (GI Joes) Blazer (GI Joes) Jackie Chan (Nova) Threshers (Pakuranga) Makos (Pakuranga)
B Grade (6 teams competed)	5th Place	Hammerheads (Pakuranga)
C Grade (6 teams competed)	🥇 Gold 4th Place	Tiger Sharks (Pakuranga) Blade (GI Joes)

What's Coming Up — Mark Your Calendars!

Schools Regional Qualifiers

Saturday & Sunday, June 13-14 | Westwave Aquatic Centre (Henderson)

National Qualifiers for our premier Auckland school teams are just around the corner. Across two intense days, local secondary schools will square off against visiting teams from Taupo, Tauranga and Mt Maunganui to secure coveted spots for the Secondary Schools Nationals, held this September in Rotorua. Come down, pack the stands, and give your loud support!

Community "Have a Go" Sessions

Saturday, June 20th, 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM (More dates rolling out in July/Aug) | Glen Innes (GI) Pool

We need your hands-on help to grow our sport! Do you know a friend, family member, or colleague who has always wanted to try underwater hockey? Our upcoming introductory sessions provide the ultimate risk-free opportunity to bring fresh faces into the pool. To ensure these events are successful, we need existing community players and parents to volunteer a couple of hours in the water or on the pool deck. Please reach out to Matt Hart or reply directly to this newsletter to sign up!

Level 1 Refereeing Course

Sunday, July 19, 2026 (9:00 AM – 4:00 PM) | Epsom Girls Grammar School

Capacity is strictly capped at 50 attendees. This comprehensive course is wide open to high school students, senior club players, and parents looking to master the rules and support tournament structures.

• Cost: Approx. $125 per person (Finalized based on total turnout to split classroom & pool hire evenly).

• Registration: Schools are requested to log initial interest and numbers with Sheryl Wu (Schools UWH Officer) as soon as possible. Invoices will be routed directly via respective school sports departments.

Announcing the 2026 Northern U18 Regional Coaches

Following a careful selection process managed by Logan Stevenson and accompanying panel we are incredibly proud to officially announce the leadership lineup for our U18 regional teams. Please join us in congratulating the coaches tasked with leading our Northern U18 teams to success at the upcoming tournament in October this year:

Girls Regional Programs	Boys Regional Programs
Northern A Girls Hannah Curwood & Rebecca Deen	**Northern A Boys** Heath Galloway & Jackson Godfrey
Northern B Girls Tom Burgess & Sam Marshall	**Northern B Boys** Nathan Marshall & Fraser Smith-Rice

All selected coaches are currently completing their specific child safeguarding modules and bring a tremendous wealth of school-level, national, and international playing and coaching experience to the table. We know they will be fantastic cheerleaders for the hard-working, supportive culture of Auckland Underwater Hockey!

Age Group World Championships — Gebze, Türkiye

A massive congratulations to the following elite athletes and officials from Auckland who have been selected to represent New Zealand at the upcoming **Age Group World Championships in Gebze, Türkiye (July 16–25).** This is an extraordinary stage where New Zealand holds an illustrious track record. This year, our flying Kiwis head overseas as defending champions in three major grades: U19 Men, U24 Women, and U24 Men. Let's get entirely behind our local representatives and wish them the best of luck!

Pakuranga Club Athletes

- **U19 Women:** Amy Cilliers, Clementine Hart, Emilia Hoeglinger, Molly Hopwood-Craig, Zoe Huang
- **U19 Men:** Logan Ross, Rory Smith-Rice | Reserve: Leo Abbot
- **U24 Men:** Otis McKenzie, Daniel Hoeglinger, Ryan Lock

GI Joes Club Athletes

- **U19 Women:** Kiera York, Reilee Butcher | Reserve: Chenuthi Galgamuwa
- **U19 Men:** Luke Marshall
- **U24 Women:** Phoebe Ata, Martha Diprose, Mollie McHale
- **U24 Men:** Fraser Smith-Rice, Nathan Marshall, Thomas Ramsbottom

Nova Club Athletes

- **U19 Men:** Finn Jozefe, Hadlee Jordan, Jack Tyler
- **U24 Women:** Charlotte O'Connor, Thea Buick, Nicole Lockie | Reserve: Paige Tyson-Taylor
- **U24 Men:** Reserve: Izaak Lees

Auckland-Based NZ Team Officials & Coaching Staff

- **U19 Women's Team:** Hannah Curwood (Head Coach), Matt Hart (Assistant Coach)
- **U19 Men's Team:** Zoe Firth (Team Manager)
- **U24 Women's Team:** Georgia Child (Head Coach), Liam Robertson (Assistant Coach), Tina Heir (Team Manager)
- **U24 Men's Team:** Nick Healy (Head Coach), Emma Rae (Assistant Coach & Team Manager)

Between Breaths: Community Player Profile

'Between Breaths' shines a spotlight on the fantastic individuals who make up our community, from school players and international reps to the parents and coaches holding the clipboards.

This quarter we are featuring **Sam Marshall** current NZ ICC champ, Dio Senior Girls Coach and U18 Northern Regional coach.

Featured Player:	***Samuel Marshall***
Primary Club & School Teams:	***GI Joes / Howick College***
NZ Representative Years	***2019 - NZU19 Men (Gold); 2024 - NZu24 Men (Gold), 2025 - NZ Men ICC (Gold)***
Position	***Forward***

The Interview Block

Q1: How did you first get hooked on Underwater Hockey, and what keeps you diving back in?

My mum saw that underwater hockey was being offered at Howick College and forced me to go because she said it looked like fun. I refused and made excuses to miss the first couple of sessions for the year. When the excuses finally ran out I begrudgingly said yes and went. Ever since that moment I have never looked back and have regretted taking so long to finally give it a go. I love the community and the friends I have made along the way, I now live with 4 other flat mates who all play underwater hockey.

Q2: Walk us through a typical match-day routine. What goes through your mind right before the buzzer sounds?

I am a firm believer that you play better when you have fun. Other than when you have game analysis sessions or start your match build up, I think it's important to have a laugh to ease the pressure and be in the moment with your friends. During the match build up is when I like to start locking in, I imagine myself going for swims and scoring goals as I do my laps to warm up. Visualization is my key to being ready before the first buzzer sounds.

Q3: What has been your proudest moment or favorite memory in the pool so far?

Winning Worlds with my U24M team in Malaysia in 2024 was pretty special. Our team had been playing together for years and it was nice to see all the hard work we put in come off. A moment that really stood out to me over the tournament was the game analysis that our coaches put in to help us secure the victory. We would pick apart each team's formation and game play and exploit their weaknesses during the games which meant we knew what to expect and could stop opposition moves from happening before they happened.

Q4: For anyone looking to pick up a stick or jump into our 'Have a Go' sessions, what advice would you give them?

Just give it a go, don't be like me and make heaps of excuses to not do it. Stepping out of your comfort zone and trying something new is scary, but once you see how cool this sport and community is, you will be instantly hooked like me. You don't have to be a good swimmer or even know how to use a snorkel to try this sport, we have a plethora of amazing coaches waiting to give you a hand at our next have-a-go session.

Q5: Quick-fire round: Heavy or light puck? Left or right side? And most importantly, what's your post-tournament meal of choice?

I prefer a lighter puck to have faster control and skills, both sides of the pool have their benefits however I always feel more goals are scored on the left. There is nothing that beats stopping off at the Matamata McDonalds for a post tournament feed.

Final Word

The enduring success of our sport is entirely down to the incredible dedication of the volunteers who put in the hours behind the scenes and, ultimately, the passionate players who continue to show up week after week!

While we have experienced a transition in committee leads, I want to extend a massive, sincere acknowledgement to our outgoing committee members who have tirelessly kept AUWH operating at its peak, several of whom manage intense professional workloads alongside international representative duties over the past two years:

- Logan Stevenson (Outgoing President)
- Joel Samuel (Outgoing Treasurer)
- Gabrielle Hoskins
- Danyon Kemp
- Hannah Curwood

Finally, a massive thank you from me to all the players, parents, club volunteers, and school support networks making this season unforgettable. See you all at the pool!

Best regards,

Matt Hart
President
Auckland Underwater Hockey Incorporated (AUWH)