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## Stingrays building on success in 2009

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What a difference a year has made for the Foothills Stingrays Swim Club.

The club is sending five swimmers to the National Age-Group championship in

Montreal in July — the first time it has ever sent a swimmer to the finals.

As well, they had 13 swimmers at the age group provincial championships in Calgary at the end of March. They sent four last year.

The biggest change for the Stingrays came when they selected Todd Melton as their new head coach.

“He’s tough,” said 13-year-old Cole Middtdal, one of the five swimmers who qualified for the nationals. “We swim a lot of lengths, but he makes it fun.”

But it’s nothing that the 31-year-old coach didn’t have to do when he was swimming competitively.

Melton swam competitively while growing up in Vernon and swam with the University of Lethbridge Pronghorns, where he earned a pair of Bachelors of Arts degrees in kiniseology and education.

“I swam for 15 years straight,” Melton said. “Yes, I can be very hard. I had really hard coaches growing up, but they were very successful coaches.”

He eased into the swimming program; first working on the swimmers’ stroke before building up into some of the longer swims (some of the swimmers swam 10 kilometres at a recent practice).

He saw at one of his first Stingrays practices that there was a lot of potential in the club.

“At the beginning of the year, I looked at all the times and I didn’t think any of them would make a national time,” Melton said. “But I was sitting on a gold mine. All they needed was a lot of stroke work and things like working on turns.

“But there was a lot of talent that was untapped.”

He credits last year’s coach Ted Murphy, who was brought in on an interim basis, for keeping the swimmers enthused.

Melton is big on goal setting – goals that are specific.

“I sit down before the start of the year and have the swimmers set goals,” Melton said. “I will sit down with them and say,



**Cole Middtdal swims at the age-group provincial championships in March in Calgary. photo submitted**

‘You have to work on your turns,’ or, ‘You have to have this time for your 50-metre pace.’ They just can’t have a goal like, ‘I will work hard at practice.’ The goals are very specific — that’s why I sit down with them.”

Melton also ensures the goals are realistic.

“If the goals are unattainable they will experience nothing but failure and we want to keep swimming.”

Melton coaches the approximately 30 competitive swimmers in the club, with the remaining 50 swimmers under the tutelage of assistant coaches Thomas South and Emma Hesterman.

The five swimmers who have qualified for the age group nationals in Montreal are Ryan Jackson, 13, 200m butterfly; Cole Middtal, 13, 200m backstroke; Holly Johnson, 12, 1,500m freestyle and Andy Osborne in the 100 and 200m backstroke. Keely Greenfield, 15, qualified for the 1,500m in a time trial in Okotoks in late March.

All five swimmers were at the Calgary meet. The others Stingrays were Kalyna Dashko, Christyna Dashko, Kelly Charron, Clair Pilling, Shayla Kurta, Jotham D’Ailly, Keenan Greenfield and Kyle Jackson.

### **2009 Stingray highlights**

- Club growth from 60 to 80 swimmers.
- 25 of 48 competitive swimmers attending the three provincial level short course meets – last year this number was 11.
- 235 club records broken thus far this season.
- Five swimmers attending Age Group Nationals – none previously.
- One swimmer achieving a Western National Time – none previously.
- Swimmers medaling at Provincials – not just finishing in the top eight.
- Athletes recognized for a top 25 time from across Canada by the Swim Alberta as part of the Youth Recognition program.
- 5 of 13 swimmers attended Age Group Champs selected for Alberta Tour teams — last year there was one.

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