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The Archer

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Dominating play: Wingate & Finchley, in blue, on their way to beating visitors East Thurrock 5-0 in January. Photo Martin Addison

Battling Wingate & Finchley blow away the winter woes

By Dom Hogan

Football club Wingate & Finchley were running the risk of relegation from the Isthmian Premier Division following a poor few months, but their recent form has propelled them up to 15th spot.

Having struggled to keep a clean sheet all season, the Blues finally succeeded in this away at Margate in December, winning 1-0, with Dylan Kearney scoring for the fourth consecutive game.

But not even Kearney's goals could prevent Wingate's arch-rivals Haringey Borough coming from behind to snatch a 2-1 win at their Maurice Rebek Stadium in Summers Lane, N12, later that same month.

Wingate then lost to Merstham on New Year's Day, before finally recording con-

secutive home clean sheet victories, the first of which came in arguably the best game of the season.

The Blues welcomed fellow strugglers East Thurrock United to the Maurice Rebek Stadium on January 3, where a dominant team performance saw them run out 5-0 winners.

Wingate then beat Bowers & Pitsea 2-0 at home for their third win in five and only their second home clean sheet of the season; they now look confidently to the spring. This strong momentum will be key

as Wingate look to build a run of results before clashes with Cray Wanderers on 12 February, which promises to be entertaining, before a derby against Enfield Town on 15 February.

Training sessions

The club is also offering Development Football Sessions with their UEFA A Licensed coach Diego Nobre on Saturdays from 9.30am to 11am. Sessions cost £8 each and you can either pay as you play, or book blocks of ten sessions, with everyone aged five and above welcome. For more information, visit www.wingatefinchley.com/development-sessions

Swim in winter water and you can face anything!

By Jane Revell

Outside it's a chilly 6°C with an icy wind making it feel even colder. In the water, it's a chilly 6°C too, with ripples on the surface of the pond. Fancy a quick dip, or maybe even a leisurely swim alongside some mandarin ducks?

I often do and I'm not alone. The number of people embracing cold water swimming is booming right now. When I first started winter swimming at the Kenwood Ladies Bathing Pond in 1994, there were just a

Nowadays it can sometimes be hard to find a peg to hang all your numerous layers of warm clothes on... and you might have to wait for a shower. So what do we all get out of it?

Alive and buzzing

For me, the swimming itself is a moment of peace, magic, connection and awareness. It shocks me into being present and completely grabs my attention. It makes me feel very alive.

And it's not just about the swimming. The feeling of camaraderie and mutual sup-



Lovely once you're in: One of the three swimming ponds on Hampstead Heath

port between co-swimmers and life guards is an essential element of the experience too. As is the terrific buzz you get afterwards - physical, mental and emotional - which can last for hours. Basically, if you can face water of 6°C, you feel you can face anything.

When I've asked other winter swimmers why they do it, they've talked about all the benefits to our health and wellbeing, and used words like life-affirming, joyful and invigorating. Some have said that it's helped them deal with issues or with long Covid. Others that it's helped cope with grief or soothe severe physical pain. The list is endless.

Feel like taking the plunge?

If you do, next month's Archer will offer a few practical guidelines for safe swimming. In the meantime, there's plenty of useful information at outdoorswimmingsociety.com and at cityoflondon.gov.uk (for the Hampstead Heath Ponds). And remember, it's always wise to check with your doctor first before embarking on a new activity like this.

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