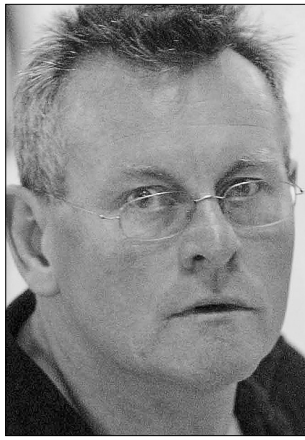


# Controversial swim coach continues to rent municipal pool time

■ By Angela Blackburn  
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF



Cecil Russell

in Sport (CCES).

Now his reinstatement is under review after sealed U.S. court documents were released indicating Russell was convicted in relation to charges of trafficking ecstasy from Spain for distribution in the U.S. — information the CCES didn't have when it lifted the ban.

With news of the review breaking this month, local authorities have been asked if they intend to continue renting pool time to Russell and his swimming club.

While some private operations, including Appleby College and the University of Toronto, have been reported

as no longer renting pool time to the club, Russell told *The Oakville Beaver* the club's pool time is as it has always been, and the Town of Oakville says it must tread carefully.

"We have our regular pool time as we have each year. I guess this is rumor control. We have our time in each of the locations as we have had in the past," Russell told *The Beaver*.

"We rent to the club, not the individual," said Mayor Ann Mulvale, noting the Town is seeking a legal opinion from its lawyers.

Russell has coached competitive swimmers at White Oaks Pool in Oakville as well as at Tansley Woods Pool in Burlington — where his swim club rents pool time the same way any resident can.

Admitting it's a "very difficult" situation, Mulvale also noted parents of children in the local swim club are paying for the coach's services.

The mayor indicated parents may have more effective tools to police their chil-

dren's activities than does a municipality.

"If the facts in the media reports are true, I don't want him around our children," said Ward 2 Councillor Fred Oliver, a former Oakville police chief, who was contacted by the media on the issue and said he responded with his opinion.

Oliver, who has served as president of the Oakville Golf Club, as general chair of the Canadian Open, where he has volunteered for 17 years, and president of the Oakville Senior A Hockey Club, said he spoke with the mayor and the issue has been left in the hands of Town legal staff.

Mulvale said cancellation of public pool time could interfere with the swim club's members, not necessarily a coach.

If reports prove true and Russell has been "less than candid" with authorities, those governing the sport will be in a position to take action, however Mulvale noted the Town could find itself in hot water if it took action on facts that are

proved untrue — even though she admitted the media reports don't look good.

Mulvale admitted it's "a delicate issue" and said there have been no allegations against the coach's conduct at the local pools.

"Staff is monitoring this and staff is keeping council informed," said Mulvale, noting caution must be exercised given the involvement of "an identifiable person."

Appleby College, when contacted for confirmation that it was no longer providing pool time to the club, said it doesn't release any information publicly about who rents the school's facilities and suggested *The Beaver* contact the swim club.

Immediately upon his reinstatement to the sport of swimming Russell was named head coach of the Dolphins Swim Club by its founder Craig Mortimer and not long after had taken over the club with Mortimer going his own way to focus on a swim academy, which is non-competitive and provides lessons.

Media reports continued with rumblings that many in the world of swimming were

not happy about Russell's reinstatement.

Earlier this summer, Sport Minister Michael Chong, who serves a portion of north Halton, asked federal government lawyers to review the CCES' reinstatement decision.

At the heart of the review now is Russell's part in an ecstasy trafficking case that saw him arrested in Spain in June 2000.

Russell convinced CCES adjudicator Graeme Mew at his 2005 hearing that he'd been cleared of involvement in a major ecstasy ring planning to ship about \$15 million worth of the drug from Europe through Canada and into the U.S.

However Arizona legal authorities this summer unsealed court documents showing that in the U.S. District Court in Arizona, Russell pleaded guilty in September 2003 to conspiracy to possession with intent to distribute ecstasy and was sentenced to four years in prison, followed by three years of supervised release.

— With files from *Torstar* newswire

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