

2022 Arena League Round 1

Competition Report

BOBCATS were back in Arena League action for the start of the 2022 season, this year our target is to gain promotion which will mean finishing in the top two/three positions at the league final in December. Our first aim is to ensure we qualify for the league final, winning the first round gives us a great chance, but there are still areas where we can improve.

The first round was once again at Kendal, competing with many of the same teams as last season. It was great to see the progress we have made as a team since last year, this was demonstrated by the strength of our relay teams where we picked up 29 points out of 40 available despite having a team disqualified. We were also faster in 20 out of the 34 individual events from the last time we raced in December 2021.

We were off to a strong start due to our performances in the open 200IM and relay events, picking up wins in the 13/Under Medley and Open Medley Relay, and second places in the 200IM's, 15/Under Freestyle Relay and Boys 11/Under 50 Backstroke. These performances ensured that Bobcats had a commanding lead after the first 8 events, over the next 8 events we picked up another three wins in the Boys 13/Under 100 Breaststroke, Girls 15/Under 100 Backstroke and Girls Open 100 Butterfly. Despite these wins, several fifth-place finishes and a strong performance from Oswestry meant we were tied after 16 events.

We didn't pick up any more wins until event number 26 and had a couple of disqualifications which cost us 7 points causing us to fall to third position after 24 events, behind Fleetwood and Oswestry. Once we had started winning again, we went on a great run of four first place and seven second place finishes from the next 12 events. Our wins came in the Boys 13/Under 100 Butterfly, Girls 15/Under 100 Freestyle, Girls Open 100 Breaststroke, Boys 13/Under Freestyle and Boys Open Freestyle.

By the end of the individual events, we had regained our lead and then powered home with two wins in the 13/Under Freestyle Relay, 15/Under Medley Relay, and a second-place finish in the Open Freestyle Relay.

The final points were:

BOBCATS: 210

Fleetwood and District: 190

Oswestry Otters: 185

Copeland: 177

Chorley Marlins: 171

This currently puts us third in the league after Middlesbrough scored 300 and Knutsford 233 at their match in Ellesmere Port. That match had eight teams and even after the points have been adjusted it doesn't fairly reflect the strength of our performance, I'm confident in a match we will beat Knutsford but will need to work hard to close the gap on Middlesbrough.

One area where we have made a massive improvement is in our 11/Under teams, last years' experience really seemed to help and this year we were much more competitive picking up almost double the number of points and being significantly faster in 8 out of 10 events. This was even more impressive as we had two 9-year old's (Charlotte Cook and Elizabeth Mikita) taking part in their first Arena League match.

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It is very early in the season, and I know our swimmers will make good progress over the next couple of months, we need this to show during the events in the middle of the match to ensure we maintain our lead from start to finish. It's going to be important to turn some of the fifth-place finishes into fourth/third place finishes and to try and get a few more wins.

In total, we had 12 first places finishes, congratulations to the following swimmers:

Owen Wilson, Boys 13/Under 100 Butterfly and 100 Freestyle.

Jasmine Bullough-Teal, Girls 15/Under 100 Freestyle.

Jamie Clayton, Boys Open 100 Freestyle.

Ben Cook, Boys 13/Under 100 Breaststroke.

Lola Cragg, Girls Open 100 Breaststroke.

Maddison McFadden, Girls 15/Under 100 Backstroke.

Lucy Turner, Girls Open 100 Butterfly.

13/Under Freestyle and Medley Relay Teams:

Lucy Charlesworth, Ben Cook, Niamh Whitaker, and Owen Wilson.

15/Under Medley Relay Team:

Lewis Clayton, Lola Cragg, Maddison McFadden, Theo Whitaker.

Open Medley Relay Team:

Jamie Clayton, Spencer Cragg, Baylie Seery, Hattie Varley.

It was great to have Nathan on poolside with us and thank you to Robyn for being our judge, Ian Whitaker for doing the announcing, and our parents for their support during the competition,

Our next match is on Saturday 12th November at Kendal again, we will be racing against the same teams plus Leyland Barracudas B Team. Hopefully we can go on to achieve a better points total and secure our place in the league final.

Ian.