

Berkhamsted Swimming Club
Herts County Championships – Final weekend

The final weekend of Herts County Swimming Championships at The Venue pool in Borehamwood, hosted the 400m events, distance freestyle and relays with Berkhamsted SC playing a full part in the proceedings.

On the Saturday, James Chennells (400m Free) and Issy Soulsby (400 IM) both swam faster than they have ever done before. Unfortunately for Issy Soulsby, after her best swim in probably 2 years and what would have been a bronze medal, she fell foul of the arcane swimming laws and found herself disqualified but can take great heart ahead of the regional Championships in a couple of months, that her form is coming right back. James Chennells managed a 5 second pb with a controlled swim placing him 5th in the Open Category in his first year in the age group. A steady start saw him behind the clock at half way but from 150m to go he hauled things back to gain 5 seconds in those 6 lengths.

The Sunday morning was set for Distance free style and the club was represented by Dan Chennells, Euan Donald and James Chennells in the 1500m, the longest event on the pool programme. Dan started hard and set personal bests at both 400m and 800m on his way to an eventual 18:42.63, chopping a massive 50 seconds from his qualifying time and pb. Euan Donald had been away with his school for the week leading up to the championships and only flew home on the Saturday a solid swim of 19:02.77 was undoubtedly handicapped by his not having been able to prepare ahead of the event. James Chennells was in the fastest heat and, after a relatively strong start was just unable to hold his pb pace finishing just 1 second outside after 60 lengths of the pool in an eventual 6th place overall. On route to the final time he set a club record for the 800m distance of 8:57.42.

So the final session was the relays, both medley and freestyle, all over 200m.

The 13 & under junior girls squad of Ella Nijkamp, Tamsin Moren, Lydia Wisely & Abigail Briers set the tone for an evening of high class swimming with 3rd in their heat with 2:21.18, chasing down the medallists all the way home. They were unfortunately pipped by just 1/100th of a second by the winners of the previous heat and had to settle for a meritorious 4th place. Abigail Briers had never swum inside 32 seconds before this and recorded a superb 30.93 for her final leg.

The boys medley saw David Graham lead off on backstroke and set a club record for the first leg of a relay in this age group posting 38.78 and was followed in the water by Alex Kalverboer, Tom Holmes-Higgin and Jack Eyles as they posted 2:35.94.

Due to a late call off through illness, Ella Nijkamp (34.13) had to swim up on the backstroke leg of the 15 & under girls medley, followed by Issy Soulsby (Breast 36.98); Abi Hewson (Fly 32.98) & Victoria Ayles (Free 33.49) all of whom swam faster than they have ever done before to record a team time of 2:17.58.

For the Boys, Luke Nijkamp set another club lead off record with 32.36, followed by Euan Donald on breast (36.01), George Thorne on fly (32.34) & Dan Chennells on free (26.77) to clock 2:07.48 and pick up a 6th place overall.

In the Open category, Charlotte Watson led off to Maddie Kiernan, Ellen Northwood & Jess Potts to post 2:14.03 followed by the boys Ish Rahim (another club lead off record of 29.40), Harry Thorne, Zac Patel and James Chennells and their joint 1:56.73 put them 8th overall.

Onto the Free relays with much the same squads and the Under 14 girls recorded another fast time to place 5th in 2:08.22 with the boys clocking 2:15.37.

For the Under 16s, Abbie Briers stepped in and up to the 4 with Abi Hewson leading off, Abbie Briers going in second and then Victoria Ayles followed by Issy Soulsby and they posted a total of 2:04.87.

There was another lead off leg club record from Dan Chennells in the boys free and the foursome combined for 1:52.94.

The final 2 relays saw Jess Potts sign off from her final counties before University with another 29 second leg. Izzy Sansom replaced Maddie Kiernan and went 32.77 then it was down to Ellen Northwood (29.31) and Charlotte Watson 29.95, returning to some sort of form to touch in a final time of 2:01.90. Then the boys saw Zac Patel set the final club best of the day leading off the free relay to Ish Rahim, Harry Thorne and James Chennells to post 1:45.13 for 7th.

This brought the championships to an end in a party atmosphere and we must thank Herts ASA for the way they organised everything and 'put on a show' for the swimmers, the officials, who gave up their time and all the other helpers without whom the show would not go on.