

Berkhamsted Swimming Club
Herts Peanuts League – Final Round

Berkhamsted Swimming Club hosted the final round of the Peanuts League at Hitchin Swim Centre on Saturday night. A team of 38 swimmers alongside 18 volunteers made the gala a success despite it being an exceptionally warm night and all the athletes returned home with smiles on their faces.

A tough league campaign had seen the club embroiled in a fight against relegation and, although ultimately unsuccessful, all the athletes involved across the 3 rounds could be rightly pleased with their performances which saw massive leaps forward in terms of technique and times swum.

An eventual 5th place of the 6 teams on the night saw them finish in 11th place overall and next year will be spent in Division 2 but they are hopeful of a rapid bounce back to the 1st Division for 2018 if the current rate of progress from the swimmers continues.

With only 2 available 9 year old boys, William Barnes and Riley Milne, it was going to be a busy night for the pair as they doubled up on individuals and swam up in the U10 relays as well.

The first personal best of the night went to Emma Hockney in the U11 freestyle finishing 3rd and was immediately followed by another pb for Eric Batt in the boy's event.

Ella Nijkamp was imperious in taking the first win of the gala for the club in the U12 50m backstroke clocking 33.88 in a gun to pad victory. This was followed by an 8 second pb in his 50m Breast from Harry Lines that also secured victory by nearly 3 seconds.

Further pbs followed from Poppy Baker & Riley Milne, in his first ever team gala (both 9 years Free), Sam Griffiths (U11 Fly), Abbie Briers, looking strong for 3rd (U12 Free) & Izzy MacDonald (U13 Back) before Boys Peanuts Captain, David Graham, capped his final Peanuts individual race with another pb and first place in the U13 Back – 38.50, almost a second clear of the opposition.

In between there had been a second place for Tom Holmes-Higgin (U12 Fly) & a 3rd place for girls captain Tamsin Moren (U13 Breast) as she returns from a knee injury.

Tilly Anderton, Baker, Orla Taylor & Evie Light combined for 2nd in the Girls 9yrs Free relay coming 2nd and, as usual the relays tended to outperform the individual results for the club as Briers led off in a 50m free best time for her, to Bonnie Brooks, Lara Coster and Nijkamp to win the U12 Free relay by just 0.18 of a second in an exceptionally exciting finish.

Ben Filer, Marcus Donald, Griffiths & Holmes-Higgin picked up 4th in their Free relay and this was followed by a brace of 2nds in the U13 Medley relays from MacDonald, Moren, Grace Payne & Daisy Laing for the girls and Lines, Graham, Sam Baker & Rafael Armstrong for the boys, the girls missing victory by just half a second. In the boy's event, Lines set another pb leading off on the 50m backstroke leg.

In the second round of individuals, Light began the second half with a win in the 9 years backstroke (21.45). There were further pbs from Ronan Philbin (U11 Breast), Coster (U12 fly), Armstrong (U13 Free) & Anderton (9 years Breast – 2nd).

Milne set a pb in his 9 years Breast followed by Dewar in her U11 back before Batt claimed a spirited 3rd in the boys U11 back as well.

Grace Payne took 3rd in the U13Fly and in the final individual event, Sam Baker wrapped up a win being the only swimmer in the event to go sub 40 with 39.40 to take victory.

The second set of relays began with a pb for Dewar leading out the Girls U11 free relay squad handing over to Grace Milnes (on her debut), Anderton & Hockney. Not to be out done Philbin repeated the lead off pb for the boys to Milne – swimming up -, Griffiths & Batt. The U12 girls squad, Coster (pb), Brooks, Nijkamp & Briers narrowly missed a second win on the night, running out of pool as Briers chased down the team and then Marcus Donald, Filer, Holmes-Higgin and Philbin, also swimming up, picked up 2nd in their U12 Medley as well.

Payne, MacDonald, Laing & Moren took 3rd in the U13 Free and it was left to the boys, Baker, Lines, Armstrong & Graham to finish on a high taking the win in the U13 Boys free relay.

The final squadron relay was, as always, a raucous affair and, in another exciting race, Light, William Barnes, Dewar, Batt, Nijkamp, Holmes-Higgin, Payne & Graham came home in 5th place.

Swimmer of the night awards, presented by coach for the night, Jan Stevens, went to Payne & Lines, not just for their performances in the water but for their overall attitude on poolside as well.

The squad will bounce back in 2018 and hope to come straight back to the top table of Junior swimming in the County.

Geoff Wood

Head Coach

Berkhamsted Swimming Club

10th July 2017