**Crystal Palace Weekend Away**

During the February half term, 20 swimmers from across 3 squads embarked on a weekend away training camp at Crystal Palace National Sports Centre. It was a rewarding trip with the swimmers getting used to training and racing in a 50m pool.

I don’t think anyone wanted to get up at 6:00am on a Saturday morning, but the excitement of Crystal Palace kept us going. We left Swiss Cottage promptly at 7:00 with just about everyone half asleep.

Whilst battling through the rain and snow, we managed to shelter and start our first session in the pool. Everyone trained hard throughout the week even when Gerry kept telling us we were going to do 50 100’s off 1 minute. We were welcomed to homemade meals each day which were all gulped down gratefully.

There was an informative nutrition talk which meant by the end of it we didn’t have an excuse to not know the difference between good food and junk food.

Quiz night was a buzz even though there was suspected cheating by the coaches. Some of our responses were surprising to say the least.

The first 2 swimming and 1 land training session paid off well because by the end of day 1 we were exhausted. However, it still didn’t stop us from looting the vending machines after lights out!

Day 2 was just as good. It was another early start but at least we got the whole pool to ourselves. Land training followed in which we learnt who was and who wasn’t flexible. The last session took a lot of pleading to persuade the coaches to let us do relays but all was successful and we ended the weekend with a well-earned rest.

It was an amazing experience for all the swimmers. The coaches were relentless and great to be around. I would love to do it again.

**Annelise O’Connell**