

ARENA 2010 Junior Inter-League Grand Final

Boldmere Swimming Club's Junior 'A' team stepped into the spotlight of the national stage last weekend, following their Div 1 title win of the Arena West Midlands Division Junior League – and their 2nd place finish in the Southern Inter-League Final. They joined 7 other top eight Junior teams in the country – representing their respective regions – in the Arena Junior Inter-League Grand Final at Corby's new International pool.

With the City of Newcastle team unfortunately advised not to travel down due to the horrendous weather conditions in the north, the line-up still starred the big city teams of eight time previous winners Liverpool, Leeds, Derby, and Norwich, along with London-based Hillingdon and the 2008 and 2009 Champions, Southport.

With two key boys missing with injuries, it was always going to be a tough task and for much of the gala Boldmere trailed in 7th and last position. After 36 of the 49 events they were six points adrift of City of Norwich, eleven behind Southport and 17 behind Derby on 165.

However, the strong-spirited team of 27 juniors stayed focussed, and as the gala climaxed they secured three top 3 places in the final four individual events - and in the nine relays they swam 'clean' races throughout – while other teams amassed DQ's. This took the Boldmere youngsters up to 5th place with 214 points - equalling their only previous Grand Final finish in 2008 - a fantastic feat. Runaway champions were City of Leeds who, with 16 race wins, amassed 322 points, some 48 points ahead of Hillingdon in 2nd place.

In the 32 individual events the Boldmere youngsters demonstrated their 100% commitment by recording a massive twenty Personal Best times, six of which were new Club Records. A further ten PB times were recorded on the first legs of relays - four of which were club records - and 6 sparkling Relay Records were added by four of the quartets.

Three swimmers (two swimmers twice) touched the timing pads first to earn maximum (eight) points – with each swim setting a new Club Record. Beth Grant dipped under 37 seconds for the first time in the 12Yr Girls 50m Breaststroke in a time of 36.89. Matt Price (11 Yr) showed some brilliant underwater work in the 50m Backstroke – following his win in the 50m Breaststroke event, while Boys' captain Jake Dixon (12 Yr), in his final Junior season, went out in style by also taking first in both 50m Fly and Backstroke.

Both Matt and Jake were recognised for their two fine performances by being awarded the Arena Top Boy prize in their respective age groups – Well done lads!

There were more top three finishes from Kate Davies who finished in second place in both 50m Fly and Breaststroke, while Girls' captain Charlotte Smith sliced nearly one second off her 50m Backstroke PB with a 33.84. After swimming up in 11 year 50m Fly, where he set a PB, Tom Bloor then finished second place in his own 10 year age group event and reduced his PB time even further, down to 35.63.

Archie Langston (10) earned six valuable points with a third place finish in the 50m Freestyle as did Eden Harlow (11) in the 50m Breaststroke in a new PB and CR time of 39.20.

The remaining twelve individual PB times came from A team first timer Leo Karski (9 Yr) 25m Backstroke, Aristeia Knight (9 Yr) 25m Free, Madeline Van-Loan (9 Yr) 25m Fly, Roan Griffiths (9 Yr) 25m Free & Fly, Taleb Givens (9 Yr) 25m Breaststroke, Laura Richardson (11 Yr) 50m Back & Free, Beth Grant 50m Free and sisters Eden(11) and Morgan Harlow (12) – both in the 50m Fly.

In the relays, the 10 year old boys' foursome of Kai Alexander, Tom Bloor, Matt Price and Archie excelled with two stunning winning performances. They lead from the start in both Medley and Free relays to set two new CR's, the latter taking the record under the 60 second mark for the first time.

In the same age group the girls also set two Club Records in both relays. In the medley, leading off on Backstroke, Lauren Wall set a PB and CR and with slick takeovers from Kate, Stella-Anne O'Hehir and Lauren Wilson they were nearly four seconds quicker than the previous qualifying final. Their Freestyle time equalled the existing record.

Representing Boldmere in their final junior event, both 12Yrs boy and girls teams set their mark by lowering CR's in Freestyle and Medley relays respectively. Jake set a blistering 12.87 CR on the first leg, handing over to Charlie Hackett, Matt Price and Ben Stanford, while Charlotte Smith (Back) also set new CR on leg one, followed by Beth (Breast), Morgan (Fly) and Margaret Gately on the anchor leg of the Freestyle.

Shining on the opening legs of their relays were Ben Stanford, Leo Karski, Kai Alexander, Zara Chatfield and Margaret Gately - all setting 25m PB's while Sydney Jackson, Sam Dineen and Joel Cunningham swam super relay legs, all setting big unofficial PB's.

Many Congratulations must go to Ash Cox and Jayne Lockett for preparing another high quality junior team to such a high standard – and securing another place in the prestigious Grand Final. Many thanks also for the tireless support that is given to the swimmers and club by parents behind the scenes. Finally, special thanks must go to Nigel Kelly (Team Manager) and chaperones Ali Hackett and Julie Wall for their help poolside with the team on the day.

