

Fantastic Performance – 4th best ever finish for the county team at the British Gas National Team Championships Sheffield on 20 October

Five team members boarded the coach at Ashford and then moved on to Orpington to pick up the rest of the team, coaches, officials and team manager on 19 October. Our regular driver then headed out to Chesterfield for an overnight stay at the IBIS hotel. We made good time through the most atrocious rain storm in many a year. Was this an omen?

The team appeared unusually quiet and subdued. Was this an omen?

After breakfast on 20 October we were then taken into Sheffield to the Pond's Forge pool. We were in the first warm up which enabled plenty of time for the ritual of body paints and skin transfers to be applied before the competition got underway. The usual parade of teams took place with Harold Pearson and Alice Latham as our captains and banner representatives. The team forgot to cheer as our county was introduced but I managed to be heard for us all!!!

We found ourselves as a team sitting away from the action of the swimming in the first pool, division one. The coaches moved to a better vantage point to assess the Kent swimmer's performances, to take split times and offer encouragement to swimmers before they went down to race. I stayed with the team to send swimmers off to their races. It is a daunting experience especially for the first timers and if swimmers are not at their block for the race, the race goes without you. Luke Gunning (sorry Luke) a 'seasoned veteran' for the Kent team just about made his race, luckily enough he was in heat 2.

The competition began in earnest and Katie Latham got us off to a good start with a very finger nail touch 2nd place in the 16/17 years 100m freestyle. Subject to ratification a county record of 56.06.

From then on in, I do not think we dropped out of the first 6 places. The team performed to the highest level, churning out exceptional times, high placings and gaining those all so valuable points, initially, we thought, just to keep us in the 1st division. It is a tough competition swimming against the best swimmers from the counties in England as well as teams from Scotland and Wales. Out of 20 teams in the first division 4 teams go down. The competition was fierce, furious and fast.

Top 3 places out of 20 went to Katie Latham 2nd 16/17 100m freestyle 56.06, Alexander Ireland 3rd 12/13 100m breaststroke 1.10.59, Kunmi Ogunfeibo 3rd 16/17 100m backstroke 56.44, girls 12/13 4 x 50m medley relay 2nd with Tamara-Elise Elliott, Annabel Guye-Johnson, Anna Broomfield and Caitlin Fearon, Tamara-Elise Elliott 2nd 12/13 100m backstroke 1.05.52 and boys 14/15 4 x 50m medley relay 2nd with Henry Rennolls, Alexander Ireland, Michael Davidson and Edward Ashworth. Savanna Jemmett came 1st in the first heat of the girls 14/15 100m backstroke and subject to ratification achieved a county record of 1.04.09.

Then it all came down to the last relay mixed 6 x 50m freestyle, boy and girl taken from the three age groups to be swum in any order, to determine whether we finished 4th or 5th overall. We had to finish above Cheshire. Cheshire was in the first heat and finished on a time of 2.40.66. Have we got our strategy right with the swim order? Our lead off swimmer was Katie Latham. Katie had made herself fully aware what had to be achieved and conveyed this to the team. That first leg meant that Katie (26.18) and one other girl were up against the boys. Like a dog with a bone she didn't let them get away from her and handed over to Theo Haslam who swam an amazing 23.90, Caitlin Fearon next 27.89, Sophie Lewis-Ward 27.91, Henry Rennolls 25.19 and Fred Biggs bringing the team home in 24.64 – 2.35.71. Job done- Kent finishes 4th, the highest ever finish since this very prestigious competition began.

It was a very happy swimming team, officials, coaches and team manager that returned to Orpington and Ashford once again through some atrocious weather. The swimmers did a great job for the county. On behalf of the Kent Executive, Swimming Committee and the team management I take this opportunity to thank you all for the tremendous effort you put in at the weekend. We must not forget to thank all the coaches who have trained and coached you and to your parents, the unpaid taxi service that ensures you get to your training sessions.

Well done team.

Swimming Team

Katie Latham – Thanet
Annabel Guye-Johnson – RTW Monson
Isabella Woods – Sevenoaks
Caitlin Fearon – RTW Monson
Sophie Waller – Dover
Natasha Sinha – Beckenham
Tamara-Elise Elliott – Beckenham
Sophie Lewis-Ward – Beckenham
Alice Latham – Thanet
Anna Broomfield – Black Lion
Savanna Jemmett – RTW Monson
Sophie Simpson – Beckenham

Fred Biggs – previously Sevenoaks
Alexander Ireland – Bromley
Jamie O’Connor – Thanet
Kunmi Ogunfeibo – Beckenham
Henry Rennolls – White Oak
Joshua Morgan – Thanet
Luke Gunning – Beckenham
Theo Haslam – Bromley
Harold Pearson – Beckenham
Michael Davidson – Sevenoaks
Michael Jacobs – Sevenoaks
Edward Ashworth – Bromley

Swimming Officials

Lesley Stewart-Paver- White Oak
Mark Child-Bexley

Swimming Coaches

Julian Metcalf-Sevenoaks
Tony Beckley-Beckenham
Matt Perkins-Orpington Ojays

Team Manager

Jean Scott-KCASA Swimming Manager