

## **National Inter-County Championships, Ponds Forge, Sheffield.**

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2007.**

This year's inter-county competition began with a County Team Training Day at Crook Log at the end of September 2007. A relaxed day was held with some group discussion, followed by Pizza Express, then some team games, gym work and a pool session. Fun was had by all - even Joe Voller - who still managed to attend, despite a broken foot!!

Following this and a number of requests from Steffi King and Katy Little, I ensured that the team were well kitted out for the competition, managing to purchase a whole host of fancy dress items that could be worn by male and female swimmers, as well as the County President and Team Managers and Coaches (photos attached).

The team all arrived at the War Memorial in Orpington on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October with plenty of time to spare. Once all were accounted for, we made our way to Sheffield for our overnight stay. The journey was good; with few hold ups and we arrived at our hotel by early evening. The swimmers made their way down to dinner by 7.30pm, to ensure that they had the best seats in the house for the South Africa v England Rugby World Cup Semi final. This was enough to keep everyone amused for a while, until hunger set in and we realised we hadn't been fed. Some resourcefulness by the team managers meant that the entire team (coaches, team managers, officials and coach driver, as well as swimmers) feasted on pizza, with plenty left over for the journey home the next day!

So, it was with broken hearts, due to the England loss, the team went to bed and slept, in preparation for the competition the next day.

An early start and a lack of staff at the hotel meant that the County President had to play waitress ensuring that the team was catered for during the breakfast rush. Note to all team managers – update future risk assessments for overnight trips!

Eventually, the team was on its way to the pool. Aboard the coach, the fancy dress was being dished out, with, quite worryingly, some of the male swimmers taking an unhealthy interest in the ra-ra skirts, long wigs and nail varnish! The body paint was also being dished out quite freely – which was a worry where the upholstery on the coach was concerned!

As one of the first teams to arrive, we could easily pick out our travelling “barmy army” consisting of the Savages, Littles and Doherrs, who had also got into the spirit of things and were more than happy to don face paint, hats and wigs too!

Despite our efforts to dress up, it was more than disappointing that the ASA didn't see fit to video the teams and athletes during the warm-up (and display on the big screen in real time), as they had done in previous years. This though, didn't put a dampener on events and the team continued to relish the atmosphere as well as their body paint. Note to team managers – ensure all body paints used at future events are grease paints, as green water based body paint leaves a yellow “puddle” in the pool, once the swimmer has dived in!

Regardless of the atmosphere and fun that was had by all, we had a number of exceptional swims from our team and not one twentieth place finish in any event – a true credit to all those who swam. A number of swimmers recorded personal best times, which is exceptional given the pressure of the event and a few first timers. No one person or team should be singled out, but the men's 16/17 yrs 200m medley team finished a more than credible 3<sup>rd</sup> place – a massive achievement given some of the “old timers” in the

team (Nick Devine, Matt Basford, Karl Botha and Xavier Mohammed). Karl Botha also recorded a fantastic second place in his age group 100m butterfly, as did Holly Ralfe in her age group 100m backstroke. Liesje Van Der Velde was 4<sup>th</sup> in the girls 100m freestyle, whilst gutsy swims from Michael Gunning and Steffi King saw them finish 9<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> in the 100m butterfly and 100m backstroke, respectively.

The final event, the mixed freestyle squadron, saw another fine team performance from Kent with the tactics paying off yet again this year. A strong start from the senior swimmers, gave us enough headway to hold on to a more than credible 9<sup>th</sup> place in the event, which was witnessed by the remainder of the team in the balcony.

Overall Kent finished 10<sup>th</sup> in Division One, securing our place in the Division again for next year. Our neighbours, Essex, saw relegation to Division Two, whilst Surrey just managed to escape finishing in 16<sup>th</sup> place.

As Team Manager, my thanks go out to all the swimmers, who not only thoroughly behaved themselves, but also really entered into the spirit of the event and made it such an enjoyable weekend. It is a loss to the County that these events finish for swimmers at 17 years of age, as our senior swimmers are a credit to any team. Particular thanks go out to Katy Little and Nick Devine as Team Captains, who showed true spirit in parading the County Banner and also ensured that all of the swimmers knew where to go, what to do and were made to feel part of the team. It is with some sadness that we have to say goodbye to our senior swimmers from this event, but it is with relish that we look forward to next year, as they have provided a strong team ethos base for the senior team next year and years to come.

Well done Kent and may we have many more trips like this one. Congratulations.

Final note to team managers – ensure that all senior staff (Team Managers, President, Coaches and Officials) on trip have dance lessons for future competition to reduce risk of embarrassment to swimmers!

Well done all and bring on 2008!

**Competing Team:** Phillipa Cochrane, Holly Ralfe, Hannah Savage, Chloe Doherr, Dan Seagrove-Castle, Oliver Coe, Matthew Farran, Michael Gunning, Helen Robinson, Rachel Bull, Liesje Van Der Velde, Steffi King, Micheal Gregory, Keiron Ager, Michael Stanley, Mark Preston, Chloe Hart, Kelsey McCue, Katy Little, Amy Kennard, Karl Botha, Nicholas Devine, Xavier Mohammed, Matthew Basford.

**Officials:** Georgina Bates, Jackie Bedford

**Coaches:** Mick Geer, Dave Whorlow

**Team Managers:** Jenni Verhorevoort, Gill Hughes

**President:** Jean Scott

Should anybody want copies of the photos please feel free to contact me on the details below:

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