

DOVER LIFEGUARDS “MEN IN BLACK TOUR” 2007

Dover Lifeguard's were in good form on the weekend of the 19th/20th May when they attended the 10th International Challenge trophy gala in Calais. There were clubs from France, Belgium, Holland and another from the UK- Lydney in Gloucestershire, all with strong squads aiming to take home the trophies on offer.

The Lifeguards had themed the weekend as “the men in black tour” due to their club colours (black and white) and all met at the docks early Saturday morning, dressed in their “men in black-invasion of France 2007” t-shirts and sunglasses. The squad looked like a team on a mission and set about enjoying the weekend in a professional and relaxed manner.



After the ferry trip the team dumped their bags (and there were lots of them!) at the French port's youth hostel and headed for the pool. Despite the drain on the energy levels by the journey the swimmers were in fine voice as they arrived on poolside. This gala is now well known for the high noise levels and superb atmosphere and this weekend was to prove no different. There was a cacophony of sound from the various sources-air horns, megaphones, drums, bugles and cheering from the swimmers from all side which made the atmosphere electric. This set the stage for an exciting weekend of swimming and the noise levels continued throughout the whole competition. To add to the atmosphere there was the customary parade of the teams around poolside, silence for the national anthems, and a Mexican wave around the pool which ensured everybody on a high before the competition started.

The Saturday afternoon session started with the 50m butterfly. This saw the 'guards on fine form with an amazing 35 improvements on entry times from 44 swims. Amongst the biggest improvements were from the youngest members of the team. Courteney Tranter (6sec), Grace Beer (9 sec), Gemma Lawson (8 sec), Christopher Clark (9 sec) and Crawford Auld (6 sec). This was topped off when Shannon Smith set a new record for the event in the 9yr age group. There were some good swims from the older squad members who recorded personal bests in the butterfly, an stroke they would not usually class as their event.

The next series of events going into the evening was the 50m backstroke. Again the Dover team were buzzing and they recorded improvements on their entry times in 29 races out of 48 swims. Kieron Mennis jumping his time forward by 15 sec followed by Chris Clark (3sec), Crawford Auld (15sec), Lewis Young (5 sec), Luke Mennis (2 sec), Courteney Tranter (5 sec), Grace Beer (4 sec), Alice Latham (4sec), and Megan Curtis (3sec). Matt Basford stormed through to set a new record at the 50m backstroke with a time of 29.74.

The team then made the trek back to the youth hostel for dinner before getting their glad rags on to attend the disco hosted by the Calais swimming club. This was an opportunity to forge new friendships and get to know their counterparts in the French town. It was past midnight when a tired but still excited squad returned to the hostel to rest in preparation for the next day of swimming.



There was an early morning wake up call for the swimmers and after breakfast they boarded the coach to arrive at the pool for a 09.30 start. The gala opened with the 50m breaststroke and saw some further amazing swims from what should have been a very tired squad. Another 37 improvements on entry times from the 44 swims. Kieron Mennis had another huge improvement (13 sec) along with Chris Clark (9 sec), Dominic Wild (9 sec), Tom Latham (3 sec), Callum Haywood (5 sec), Crawford Auld (9 sec), Matt Mennis (11 sec), Sam Woodard (3 sec), Matt Farran (3 sec), and Tom Russell (3 sec). There were some great swims from the girls too with most recording 1-2 sec improvements. Charlotte Hyde swam a determined race and was rewarded with a new record for the event in the 16/17 yr age group.

The next races were the 50m freestyle. There were more confident swims from the Dover team with 26 improvements on the entry times. Courteney Tranter (9 sec), Keiron Mennis (8 sec), Chris Clark (6 sec), Dominic Wild (10 sec), Matt Austin (4 sec), Crawford Auld (12 sec) and Matt Mennis (9 sec).

The morning session closed with the squadron relay and the Lifeguards squad showed a real team effort, finishing ahead of the hosts to take the first place trophy for the relays.

The final session was the 100m individual medley and used the results of the individual 50 m events added together to seed the top 12 swimmers from each age group. Following the Lifeguards successes in the 50m events this meant that almost the entire squad were taking part. In the 9 yr age group for girls Shannon Smith was 1st, Ellie Weymouth 2nd and Mollie Allen 5th. The boys in the same age group were Dominic Wild 2nd, Chris Clark 5th and Keiron Menniss 8th. The 10/11yr girls made a clean sweep of the top five places with Megan Curtis 1st, Katie Latham 2nd, Hannah Delo 3rd, Gemma Lawson 4th, and Alice Latham 5th Followed by Grace Beer in 7th place.

The 10/11yr boys finished well with Ben Evans 2nd, Sacha Wild 3rd, Evan Waters 4th, 6th for Dan Latham and 7th for Jamie Woodard. In the 12/13yr age group Dover took a 1-2-3 in both the girls and boys event, Sophie Weymouth 1st, Megan Basford 2nd, Natasha Hyde 3rd, Matt Farran 1st, Sam Woodard 2nd, and Sam Gibbs 3rd. The 13/14 yr age group had Tessa Dunford finish 4th and Amy Gibbs 7th, with Adam Delo 1st in the boys event, Luke Menniss 8th and Luke Matcham 12th.

The top two age groups saw Dovers senior swimmers in action and there were 1st places for the ladies- Laura Austin Kaira Redman and Siobhan Philpott with 2nd place for Charlotte Hyde and 4th for Stephanie Jordan. For the Dover Men there were 1sts for Matt Basford and Alistair Walker with Chris Keen just beaten into 2nd place by 2 100ths of a second. Tom Russell finish in 5th place. This was a superb performance from this team and the whole squad entered into the spirit of the weekend. The older swimmers were a great role model for the young stars of the future and the weekend was a great success. The "Men in Black" were awesome and came home with the relays first place trophy and the team individual performance trophy well done to all.

Thanks to all who helped make the weekend possible-Lynn Latham, Kim Latham, Jayne Weymouth, Siobhan Philpott, Barry Waters. Special thanks go to the organisers, who handled all the boring stuff like paperwork, first aid, etc Jan Hyde and Scott Walker, without these people this trip would never have got off the ground.