

Lifeguards Show Strength in Relegation Battle

Dover Lifeguard Club hosted the final round of this years' Speedo League on Saturday. The competition was stiff and the gala became a battle to see who would remain in division 1 and who would be relegated into division 2. The guards' needed to maintain their recent good form if they wanted to hold their position in their current league.

The gala opened well with the ladies open 200 individual medley. Sophie Mitchinson put in a determined performance to be narrowly piped to the post over the last leg, gaining her second position. This was followed by the guards' youngest swimmers of the night. Both the 11/u boys and the 11/u girls finished first in the 4 x 50 m free relay. Megan Curtis, Alice Latham, Katie Latham, Evan Waters and Jamie Woodard all put in magnificent performances but the teams saw the backbones of their relays through their final legs of Gemma Lawson and Ben Evans, both swimming close to their personal bests. Callum Haywood also swam a strong leg in the boy's team, his only swim of the night, showing his great team spirit as he shouted down the other teams.

A similar performance was to be found in the next age group up with second and first places respectively for the girls and boys 13/u medley relay respectively. Megan Basford got the girls off to a great lead on the backstroke with Tasha Hyde maintaining this on the breaststroke. Florence Papagnout put in a superb fly leg of the race with Gemma Lawson, swimming against swimmers 2 years older holding on to just be touched out into second place. The boys' team consisting of Matthew Farran, Sam Woodard, Sam Gibbs and Callum Basford lead from start to finish with good legs from all with the team steadily building on the lead Mathew had earned them.

The girls' open 4 x 50 medley team also finished first hauling in more points for the determined team. Megan Basford once again got the team off to a great start on backstroke, this time with Charlotte Hyde holding on with a near personal best performance on the breaststroke. Kaira Redman fought hard with a good solid fly performance, Sophie Mitchinson was determined to hold the lead which she managed to do superbly, touching out the other teams. After this haul of relays, the team were off to a great start leading narrowly by a few points.

The individual races started well with excellent performances from the youngest swimmers. Katie Latham and Ben Evans both in the 11/u backstroke lead the fields with Katie finishing 1st in a time of 38.93 and Ben 1st in a time of 39.07. Kaira Redman put in yet another battle in the open 100m fly finishing second in a time of 1.13.46. This was followed by the youngsters again with Megan Curtis and Ben Evans both finishing first in the 11/u 50m fly, Megan in a time of 37.87 and Ben in a time of 37.82 both great performances. Megan Basford again led the field in the 13/u backstroke showing her superb talent to finish first in 1.18.15. Then the youngsters swam their hearts out this time in the 11/u 50m breast with Alice Latham and Sacha Wild both snatching first places to finish in 45.54 and 46.16 respectively.

A special mention must also go to Sam Woodard who battled to finish in the boys 13/u 100m fly when his goggles came off at the start and they were left round his neck. However, he did not give up and fought to the very end to finish third in a time of 1.16.24, impressive without goggles.

Tessa Dunford swam well in the 15/u freestyle gaining a personal best of 1.06.45 and a first place, this was followed shortly by a second place for Charlotte Hyde ,in the ladies open 100m breast ,who finished in a time of 1.22.92. Dima Miller also put in a determined performance to also finish second in the same event which is great as he returned from retirement to swim especially for the team. Evan Waters and Florence Papagnout also swam well to give yet more first places to the team Evan in the 50m freestyle in a time of 34.12 and Flo in the 100m free in a time of 1.06.90.

The gala finished with yet more relays and yet more impressive performances from all the team. The youngsters set the relays off demonstrating what they do best with first places for both the boys and girls 11/u medley relays. The boys 13/u freestyle relay also swam hard with Matt Farran opening the relay and Sam Woodard and Sam Gibbs maintaining their good position. It was down to Callum Basford to hold on for the finish and he was just narrowly pushed into second place in a close finish.

The final squadron relays saw a real battle as the guards' knew the point's totals were now really close. The girls fought hard with all swims under 32 seconds and Sophie Mitchinson on the final leg breaking 30 seconds again but the girls were just pushed into third place. The boys finished 4th with determined swims from everyone who had been recruited from retirement to swim.

The point's totals at the end were nail bitingly close with one point between second and third place. After much deliberation, the guards' finished second which meant they had managed to hold on and remain in division 1.

At the end, Coach Tim Hyde awarded a trophy for the best individual performance over the three Speedo league galas. The winner was Matthew Farran who had put in consistent performances over each gala, gaining the team more points than any other swimmer.