

City of Leeds celebrate their fourth consecutive junior inter-league victory



'ABOVE ALL A TEAM'

City of Leeds are chasing history after winning their fourth consecutive national junior league title. Roger Guttridge reports from Corby.

Pictures by MRCPhoto at www.mrcphoto.co.uk

They're relative newcomers to this competition but four wins in as many years means City of Leeds are already the equal second most successful club in the Arena Junior Inter-League final's 35-year history. The champions of the White Rose League certainly lived up to their club motto - 'A team above all, but above all a team' - as they achieved a 46-point victory margin over nearest challengers Hillingdon at Corby International Pool.

Only City of Liverpool have won more consecutive titles - five in a row from 1992-96. And only City of Liverpool have won more in total - eight between 1992 and 2001. In the final's earliest days, Luton and Vauxhall won three times in the first four years (1979-82) with plain Luton SC making it four for the Bedfordshire town in 1985.

'We were really looking forward to today but we were also a little bit nervous having won it three times,' said Kevin Schofield, Leeds'

regional age group coach. 'The only team to have won it four or more times in a row is Liverpool and we wanted to match that. We have been working hard for that.'

Five in a row?

But will they be able to make it five in a row in November 2014? 'Of course we will,' interjected 11-year-old Matthew Enright. If the young swimmer is right, it will match Liverpool's five-in-a-row record.

If the chasing pack need some encouragement, there are a few statistics that suggest the gap is closing. Leeds' points tally of 301 was 20 less than in the previous two years while their victory margin (46) was their lowest yet, albeit marginally - they won by 48 in 2010, 51 in 2011 and 77 in 2012.

Leeds' Ben Rayner featured in the honours list for the third year running, earning both the top swimmer award for his age group and the top record-breaker award for his winning time ▶



Clockwise from left: Tia Ward won the 10yrs backstroke for City of Leeds; Leeds coach Kevin Schofield; Leeds supporters cheer on their team; Northampton join in the fun of the pre-final parade; Hillingdon girls' captain Brodie Judge set new records in the 12/u 50m freestyle and backstroke; Molly Thompson on her way to a breaststroke win for Hillingdon; Leeds' Ben Rayner was top boy record-breaker with his 11/u 50m butterfly

of 31.37 in the 11/u 50m butterfly. Tia Ward, winner of the 10yrs 50m backstroke (35.04) and freestyle (31.82), shared the 10yrs top girl award with Peterborough's Anna Blakeley.

A programme change meant two additional records each for Leeds and Hillingdon in the 12/u relays, which became 4x50m instead of 4x25m.

Other individual winners for Leeds were Ella Cowan in the 10yrs 50m breaststroke (40.45), Viktoria Gnant in the 11/u 50m freestyle (33.26), Matthew Enright in the 11/u 50m breaststroke (40.01) and 12/u 50m butterfly Leah Crisp (31.52) and Liam Birrell (30.34), who completed a run of four wins in a row.

Close battle

Hillingdon took a handsome share of the honours as they came second for the second year running and the third time in four years - but not before a close battle for second place

with Stockport Metro, who finished just two points behind them to reverse their 2011 placings.

Hillingdon's captains, Brodie Judge and Alfie Collins, led from the front, winning the top girl and top boy awards for the 12/u age group. Judge set new records in both her individual events with impressive times of 27.12 in the 50m freestyle and 30.24 in the 50m backstroke. Team-mate Molly Thompson's winning 12/u 50m breaststroke time of 34.63 was also a finals record, toppling a standard held since 2004 by Lincoln Vulcans' Sophie Allen, who is now an international IM and breaststroker and who competed in the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Alfie Collins and Max Fraser completed a hat-trick of Hillingdon doubles. Collins followed Judge's freestyle and Thompson's breaststroke with wins in the equivalent boys' events in 28.53 and 36.02. Max Fraser did the same in the backstroke in 32.31.

Hillingdon junior coach Gary Mohamed said: 'It was an amazing performance from every one of our swimmers. We broke five records, including the cannon relay - and bear in mind we are only a borough not a city team. Our captains, Brodie Judge and Alfie Collins, showed outstanding leadership and were the top boy and girl in their age group.'

Wolf pack

Stockport Metro - fifth last year - challenged for the second place they achieved in 2010 and 2011 but just missed out. 'I thought that our performance was of a higher standard than in the previous round,' said head of junior development, Martin Brooks. 'The kids did some

'We were looking forward to today but we were also a little nervous, having won it three times. Only City of Liverpool have won four or more in a row. We wanted to match that'



excellent racing. Last year we came fifth so it was also an improvement on that.'

He added: 'This is an excellent competition to be involved in. It gives us an opportunity to test our racing skills and see where we are compared to the rest of the country - to compare our progress with the other juniors in the country.'

Stockport also maintained their tradition of sporting intriguing logos on their teeshirts.

'Wolf pack' was their slogan for the 2013 final. 'It means we all stick together like a pack of wolves,' explained swimmer Jessica Knight. 'And there are the senior wolves helping the wolf cubs.'

Brooks added: 'Since we lost the funding as an ITC, we are looking at being like a wolf pack, where we all work together as a team. We ride together as a pack. Every time a Stockport swimmer steps on the block, the whole team is



Left: The 10yrs 50m butterfly was one of three individual wins in two age groups for Northampton's Edward Mildred, who also broke the league finals record in the fly; below: Hillingdon boys' captain Alfie Collins won the age group award after victory in the 12/u freestyle and breaststroke; below left: Stockport Metro's Amy West set new records in the 9yrs 25m butterfly and breaststroke

'It was an amazing performance from every one of our swimmers. We broke five records, including the cannon relay. Our captains showed outstanding leadership'



◀ behind them.'

One cub who has already discovered the hunting mentality is Amy West, who set league records in the 9yrs 25m breaststroke (19.53) and 25m butterfly (16.41) and won the age group award. Stockport's other four wins came in the relays, including three of the four 9yrs team races.

Busy Eddie

Edward Mildred was named top boy in his age group for the second year running as Northampton matched their fourth place from 2012. Ten-year-old Mildred was involved in five of his team's eight race wins, including one in an older age group. Two of these came within two or three minutes of each other as Mildred took

the 10yrs 50m fly in a league record time of 32.47 followed, in the very next boys' event, by the 11/u 50m freestyle in 30.53. Just six events after that he was back on the block to win the 10yrs 50m freestyle in 30.87.

This was a productive age group for Northampton with wins in both 10yrs boys' relays and another individual victory from Oliver Church in the 50m breaststroke (42.57). Other Northampton winners were Ben Ellison in the 9yrs 25m butterfly in 17.06 and Katie Durno in the 11/u 50m breaststroke in 38.94.

Former champions

Southport Aqua - champions in 2008 and 2009 - returned to the final after a year's absence and came within seven points of matching the

fourth place they achieved in 2010 and 2011. Abbey Jones was named top 11-year-old girl after winning the 11/u 50m butterfly (32.10) and 50m freestyle (29.77). Ruby Hughes won the 9yrs 50m freestyle in 15.37 and there were relay wins from the girls' 9yrs medley and 10/u freestyle teams.

Consistent

West Midlands club Boldmere are nothing if not consistent. After coming fifth in both 2010 and 2011, they held East Midlands rivals City of Peterborough at bay by just three points to replicate last year's sixth place. Oliver Carless was Boldmere's only winner in the 9yrs 25m backstroke in 18.58. He also provided one of their two second places in the 25m freestyle ▶



‘Since Stockport Metro lost the funding as an ITC, we are looking at being like a wolf pack, where we all work together as a team. We ride together as a pack’



Clockwise from left: Boldmere's William Cooper came second in the 50m breaststroke; Abbey Jones was named top 11-year-old girl after winning the 50m butterfly and freestyle for Southport; City of Peterborough's Anna Blakeley shared the 10yrs top girl award after winning the freestyle; two victories won Barnet Copthall's Jared Lewis the 9yrs top boy award; opposite page: City of Leeds captains Ellie Jones and Liam Birrell with their team's trophies



◀ (14.92), the other coming from William Cooper in the 10yrs 50m breaststroke (44.35).

Award shared

Anna Blakeley was one of two winners as Peterborough - debutants in 2012 - matched their previous seventh place from last year, when they were four points behind Boldmere. Blakeley shared the 10yrs top girl award with Tia Ward after winning the 10yrs 50m freestyle in 30.87. Team-mate Holly Graves won the 9yrs 25m backstroke in 19.05.

M11 champions

Jared Lewis gave M11 Junior League champions Barnet Copthall something to celebrate as they made their first appearance in the national final for at least five years.

Lewis won the 9yrs 25m freestyle in 14.92 and the breaststroke in 21.19 to claim the top swimmer award for his age group.

Also winning for Barnet were Archie Price in the 10yrs 50m backstroke in 35.63 and Gaurika Singh in the girls' 10yrs 50m fly (35.72). 🏆

Roger Guttridge



New experience

Barnet Copthall's first appearance in the national final for a few years introduced a new set of parents to the competition - including Johnson Ogunniyi (right of picture), dad of 12-year-old Sophie Ogunniyi.

'It's the first time I've been to this - it's a great event with a great atmosphere,' he said.

'It's a little bit hot in here but Arena are very good - very modern.'

Johnson, himself a footballer and track-and-field athlete at 'amateur level', added: 'I think it's good for kids to have competition at a very young age. It helps their mental strength as they grow older.'

Fellow Barnet Copthall dad Dave Tyme (left), father of Breyahna Tyme, also 12, said: 'This is our first time in the final since I've been involved.'

'I think it's great to see the kids from different clubs coming together.'

'It's also different from your regular swimming - it's really team-oriented whereas most events are individual.'

PARENT POWER

Parents share their views about the junior league final

Doing the splits

Hillingdon mum Lyn Styles (pictured right) was religiously taking the split-times for every race as she and fellow mum Debbie Dempsey (left in picture) cheered their team from the back row of the public gallery.

'This is my third year here and I love it,' said Lyn, mum of 12-year-old Liam Styles. 'It's a great, great atmosphere. All the groups can meet together in a central place - and Corby is a great venue.'

She added: 'It's a lovely event for the swimmers and the coaches. And it's good to see how the club's nine to 12-year-olds are doing.'



Hungary for success

Hungarian-born Csaba Gnant, whose native country has a great swimming tradition, has a different perspective on the junior league final.

'I have lived here for five years but before that we were in Italy, where my children learned to swim, and before that in Hungary,' said Csaba, whose 11-year-old daughter, Viktoria Gnant, won the 11/u 50m freestyle for City of Leeds.

'This is my third time here [at the final]. I don't think there are team events like this in Italy or Hungary. It's very good for the team. The kids and the parents get together and are supporting each other, which is very nice. It's also good preparation for any future championships. And of course we hope to win!'



ARENA JUNIOR INTER-LEAGUE FINAL CORBY, NOVEMBER 24, 2013 RESULTS AND AWARDS

OVERALL RESULT

1	City of Leeds	301
2	Hillingdon	255
3	Stockport Metro	253
4	Northampton	226
5	Southport Aqua	219
6	Boldmere	177
7	City of Peterborough	174
8	Barnet Copthall	156

TOP RECORD-BREAKER AWARDS

Brodie Judge (Hillingdon) 12/u 50m freestyle	27.12
Ben Rayner (City of Leeds) 11/u 50m butterfly	31.37

TOP SWIMMER AWARDS

9yrs
Amy West (Stockport Metro)
Jared Lewis (Barnet Copthall)
10yrs
Anna Blakeley (City of Peterborough) & Tia Ward (City of Leeds)
Edward Mildred (Northampton)
11yrs
Abbey Jones (Southport Aqua)
Ben Rayner (City of Leeds)
12yrs
Brodie Judge (Hillingdon)
Alfie Collins (Hillingdon)

LEAGUE FINAL RECORDS

Boys	
10/u	
Edward Mildred (Northampton) 50m butterfly	32.47
11/u	
Ben Rayner (City of Leeds) 50m butterfly	31.37
12/u	
City of Leeds 4x50m medley relay (Ben Rayner, Nathan Lerner, Liam Birrell, Jonathan Milner)	2:08.33
Hillingdon 4x50m freestyle relay (Alfie Collins, Ben Scott, Liam Styles, Max Fraser)	1:57.05

Girls	
9yrs	
Amy West (Stockport Metro) 25m breaststroke	19.53
Amy West (Stockport Metro) 25m butterfly	16.41
10/u	
Tia Ward (City of Leeds) 25m backstroke	35.04
12/u	
Brodie Judge (Hillingdon) 50m freestyle	27.12
Molly Thompson (Hillingdon) 50m breaststroke	34.63
Brodie Judge (Hillingdon) 50m backstroke	30.24
Hillingdon 4x50m medley relay (Brodie Judge, Molly Thompson, Jemima Hall, Grace Dempsey)	2:07.70
City of Leeds 4x50m freestyle (Sophie Hobbah, Ciara Schlosshan, Emily Johnson, Ellie Jones)	1:54.83

Mixed	
Hillingdon 8x25m freestyle cannon relay (Cara O'Toole, Cameron Bartholomew, Rosie Joslin, Billy Lee-Knowles, Emily McCarthy, Dillon Roglic, Brodie Judge, Alfie Collins)	1:55.54

TOP SWIMMERS



Age group winners (clockwise from top): 9yrs Jared Lewis (Barnet Copthall) and Amy West (Stockport Metro); 10yrs Edward Mildred (Northampton); 12yrs Alfie Collins and Brodie Judge (both Hillingdon); 11yrs Abbey Jones (Southport) and Ben Rayner (Leeds); 10yrs joint winners Tia Ward (left, Leeds) and Anna Blakeley (Peterborough)

RECORD-BREAKERS



Hillingdon girls' captain Brodie Judge receives the girls' top record-breaker award from Richard Townsend (left), sales manager for Arena's UK distributors Solo Sports, and Corby's deputy mayor Anthony Dady



Ben Rayner (City of Leeds) is presented with the boys' top record-breaker prize by Richard Townsend and deputy mayor's consort Alison Dady