

Water Polo
South East Region Under 16 Girls
Inter-Regional Tournament 2018
Millfield School, Somerset
July 7th & 8th.

First, we should acknowledge the efficient organisation and staffing of the tournament in this challenging dual pool scenario, which ultimately helped us, more of which in the technical report.

Secondly, we were supported by a large number of parents, who travelled some distance. Some saw the Red Arrows do the Concorde roll as we arrived at Millfield, and they arrived at Yeovilton.

For the first time we entered two teams in this competition and with clear purpose, that meant we supplied two referees, many thanks to John Maddock and Omar Cumik, who I understand both had good weekends.

Two firsts in one weekend, we entered two teams, for the first time, South East Anderida and South East Solent. South East Anderida won the competition, the first win in any national competition for a South East Region water polo team, unexpected, unconventional, by current polo thinking, and all the sweeter for it. How the girls managed this enormous achievement is for South East eyes only, in a separate report.

Our aims going in to the weekend were a top five finish for Anderida, so that we play in Division 1, for the Under 18 title in early 2020. With Solent, our aim was to get higher level experience in to a group that comprised several promising players, some recent full age joiners and some young ones, who will play in the U14 SER team December. Cutting these teams was a minefield of difficult decisions, none of which were made lightly.

In broad terms, I believe we got it right. A lot of players came away with a clear idea of what they need to do to raise their game and they improved their understanding of how matches are refereed, how tournament water polo works, and gained the experience of facing tough or adverse competition that is the making of great players.

South East Anderida

Maddie Calthrop GK
Lucy-Mai Helliwell C
Lucy Bullock
Caitlin Silk
Grace Byford
Nicole Fawcett

Lotti Apps
Audrey Tala
Millie Mcalister
Grace Turner

Coaches – Ewan Partridge, Matt Mcalister.
TM – Helen Bullock

League Stage Matches Group B – format 2x8 minutes

South East Anderida 3 Ireland 6

We faced the unknown quantity that is Ireland first up. This year, as last, they have a strong swimming team, well drilled in press defence and transition in attack. Although strong, we are as ever lack match practice against quality opposition. As the match progressed, we uncovered what Ireland might be vulnerable to, but not consistently enough to come back at them. Only as the day progressed did it become clear how good our performance had been, in relative terms.

Goals – Nicole 2, Caitlin
Majors – Lucy 2, Grace B.

South East Anderida 8 East Midlands 0

We shut down most threats the opposition offered, and found a great deal more time and space to score. This was a good match to follow the Ireland game with.

Goals, Grace T 3, Caitlin 2, Audrey, Lucy-Mai, Nicole.
Majors, Grace T 2, Nicole.

South East Anderida 6 North West Thunder 1

I was surprised at how easily overcame in this match, discussed further in the full technical report.

Goals, Nicole 3, Caitlin, Lucy, Audrey
Majors, Grace B 2, Lucy-Mai, Nicole.

South East 8 East Angels 2

In this, like the two matches above, we created between two and three chances for every one we scored, passing accuracy, timing and finishing being the contributing factors to a low conversion rate. Nevertheless we were very mean at the back again, and our strengths, by now were beginning to outweigh our weaker points.

Goals, Nicole 4, Caitlin 2, Grace B, Audrey.
Majors, Milly.

South East Anderida 8 West Midlands 2

This was our last league stage match, played on the Sunday morning, we had already qualified for the semi-final the previous evening, due to points spread and head to head performances in our league group.

Nevertheless, we took nothing for granted. I could almost write the same postscript as for the previous match.

Goals Caitlin 2, Audrey 2, Nicole 2, Grace B, Lucy-Mai.
Majors Lucy-Mai

Semi Final – Format 4x5 minutes

South East Anderida 8 North East 7

In the light of our encounter with Ireland, and taking account of how to best deploy our resources, we took a view on our tactics and began to implement these through the three matches above.

We know a lot about NER, following a U14 semi-final encounter last December. This was the match in which those tactics were implemented *en large*, strategically if you like.

Right from the start, the movement of Nicole, Caitlin and Audrey undid NERs organised defence. However, at the other end, Lucy picked up two majors early, totally unjustified. Throughout this competition we got nothing easy from the referees.

At half time we pulled Nicole back on to the NER pit player, she did an excellent job and Lucy pushed on. This was perhaps the greatest test of our ability to implement our tactics, and they stood the test of change. With a couple of minutes to go, we lost Lucy on a third, and in my view poorly called, major. Towards the end we were hanging on a bit, however, we had sufficiently damaged and demoralised the opposition to see us through. I cannot overstate enough what a great performance this was, in terms of practical implementation of what we envisaged, and great for morale.

For the duration of the match the whole of the Solent team and all the parents were worth an extra man, the support from the balcony was superb.

Goals, Caitlin 3, LucyMai 2, Audrey 2, Lucy,
Majors, Lucy 3, Nicole 2, Caitlin, Audrey, Lotti.

Final – Format 4x5 minutes

South East Anderida 9 Ireland 8

Since 2012 we haven't made a final in any age group. So six years on here we are again, this time facing a team that beat us yesterday.

Without a doubt, the Irish were the best drilled and, in mechanistic terms, efficient team in the competition. They brushed aside South West 13-5 in their semi, and on paper, or statistically based on the previous day's performance, everybody expected us to succumb to a similar fate.

Three things carried us through to victory. First the spirit and fitness level of the players and their will to win, secondly, their implementation of the tactics, discussed elsewhere, and finally my words of experience from 2012, when some players were overawed, others settled for silver. Not this time, I told them so.

During our league stage encounter I noted a particular weakness in their defence, and that we could do more to blunt their attack. Early on, our tactics worked, but the referees didn't see it that way. Despite senior referees, they were indifferent to blatant holding and impeding of drives, and we found ourselves 2-6 down at half time.

Our players were incensed by the officiating and I only reinforced my view that they must make the most of holding and impeding drives, and not give up. And so it was, we hauled ourselves back in to the match, as our opponents lost control of the game and their discipline, and found ourselves at 7-7, we went down a goal, but got back to 8-8. With about 5 seconds left, up-stepped Nicole Fawcett, a diamond cut and polished in South Africa, her shot from the right side, beyond 12m out, just in our half, started high, dipped viciously, clipped the inside of the post and cannoned in. The nerve, the presence, the technique, in the final moments of a final, will become the stuff of legend. This wasn't quite the end, as the buzzer went, Maddie tipped over Ireland's long shot.

The team performance, the sheer hard work involved in tactical implementation should not be overshadowed by that great moment, because it was the sheer bloody mindedness, fitness and technique, in the face of adversity, that got us through. This team never stopped, never gave up.

Goals, Nicole 4, Caitlin 3, Lucy-Mai, GraceB.
Majors, Nil.

South East Solent

Antonia Neald GK
Maisie Standen C
Ruby Rosser
Evie Fawkes
Fleuve Williams
Tahlia Vyse
Rebekah Searle
Emily Wiltshire
Hebe Poole
Hannah Wiles
Jess Jonas
Lily Ross

Coaches

Amy Styles
Jess Helliwell

TM
Rosie Standen

Group A contained what proved to be several strong teams,
League stage matches 2x8 minutes.

South East Solent 1 South West 14

Not knowing what to expect, from the start they pressed us and broke off us easily. This game show us that some of the players lacked game experience. After this game the girls showed that they wanted to learn and asked questions.

Scorers: Maisie

Majors: Maisie, Evie, Jess

South East Solent 1 London 19

The London team were drilled at what they did, knowing this we tried to reduce the amount of opportunities they had. This didn't work as they just had a greater understanding of the game and worked well as a team.

Scorers: Jess

Majors: Maisie

South East Solent 3 Scotland 9

Despite having two big loses the team were in great spirit and wanted to work as a team. In this game they started talking to each other and understand the game more, the ball movement was much improvement, and we started to control our attacks.

Scorers: Maisie 2, Fleuve

Majors: Maisie, Fleuve, jess

South East Solent 3 North West Lightning 11

After having a long chat about the previous game, in this game we set about improving our marking in the first half. We marked everyone, giving them limited opportunities. As the game went on, and we made changes this began to slip.

Scorers: Maisie 2, Emily

Majors: Maisie, Ruby 2, Rebekah, Emily 2, Hebe, Hannah, Jess

South East Solent 1 North East Steelers 28

This was the first game on Sunday, knowing that NE wanted a higher goal difference, this was always going to be hard. They played with a strong centre forward, who always looked like scoring, our defence held strong to limit her

opportunity. We created a lot of chances to score, more than any other game. However this team have strong drivers, who will also score.

Scorers: Maisie

Majors: Maisie, Ruby, Hannah

Classification Matches, format 4x5 minutes.

South East Solent 4 West Midlands 10

We knew this team had several good players, we man marked these, doing this it reduced their opportunities. In attack was played on the break, creating space and we increased our shooting opportunities, improvement began to show.

Scorers: Maisie 3, Jess

Majors: Maisie, Ruby 3, Emily 2

South East Solent 3 North West Lightning 10

Having played Lightning on Saturday, we knew what they could do, so we tried to reduce the amount of counter attacks they had. In this game we increase the amount of time we had on the ball.

Scorers: Maisie 2, Hannah

Majors: Maisie 2, Fleuve 2, Jess

This weekend was a learning curve for all. We had a mix of ages and experience, our youngest being 11, a young mostly inexperienced team, who hadn't played a lot together, over the weekend the team gelled and started to work well.

From this weekend the girls need to work on their understanding of the game, this is done by watching other teams, other players, and asking questions.

Where and how we go from here is for another document, our view of ourselves has now to change, we won a major competition, we have a number of talented players to cater for, and many more to nurture, some of whom will emerge.

Whether we like it or not, the British water polo world's view of us has changed forever. Our players discipline in the face of adversity was exemplary, and we will no longer be discounted as an also ran team.

Bear in mind Anderida contained only two full age players.

Our mission was to finish top 5 five, to qualify for 2020, and to ensure our developing players got exposure to this level of competition. It was not perfection, we over-accomplished on aim met the other.

Ewan Partridge & Amy Styles