

ASA SOUTH EAST REGION WATER POLO
UNDER 18 (2003 & YOUNGER) INTER REGION
CHAMPIONSHIPS
PONDS FORGE SHEFFIELD, 1ST- 2ND FEBRUARY 2020

After a training and selection event in January the following players were selected to represent the South East in the Under 18 (2003 and younger) Boys Inter Regional Water Polo Championships taking place in Ponds Forge Sheffield over the weekend of the 1st – 2nd February 2020:

1	Owen	Peel
2	Owen	Halligan
3	Ben	Phillips
4	Antonio	Bardella
5	Alexander	Sandberg
6	Josh	Luff
7	Jamie	Bond
8	Matty	Smith
9	James	Croud
10	Zach	Kingett
11	Josh	Coulson
12	William	Gracie-Langrick
13	Owen	Street

Boys water polo in the SE has been building in experience and depth over the last few years. There are regular training evenings on at least a monthly basis, mostly held at Splashpoint, Worthing.

Whilst the SE remain in Division 2 of this competition, the coaches felt confident that this team could be more competitive than in previous years, especially as the team included four boys who are in the current Under 17 (born 2004 and younger) England Squad and a further 2 boys in the 2005 National Academy.

Division 2 comprised of 7 teams, separated into 2 leagues. The round robin games were played on day 1 of the competition with play-off games on day 2.

Match 1 – v – Ireland.

Whilst the SE ultimately lost this game 8-7, they were competitive throughout and in the 3rd quarter led the Irish by 2 goals at 5-7. The Irish are traditionally a physical team and this encounter did not disappoint. At times the SE players matched the physicality of the opposition but unfortunately gifted a number of easy goals to the opposition in the form of 4 penalties. A 7-7 draw would have been a fair result and an unfortunate defensive mistake in the final minutes, gifted the Irish an easy goal.

Josh Luff's shooting was outstanding and he scored 6 of the SE's 7 goals.

Match 2 –v- Scotland.

After only a 90 minute break, the SE were playing their second game which was the first game for a well-rested Scottish team. The natural counter attacking game of SE was stifled by the Scottish who hardly ever attacked with more than 3 players. That said the Scottish were able to score themselves on their own counter attacks. This was not a game that would have excited any neutral spectators. As often happens with inexperienced referees, far too many minor fouls were given which meant there was little flow in the game. With only five goals in 4 periods of water polo, the SE lost the game 3-2.

Match 3 – v- South West

Knowing the outcome of this game would have no influence on who or when the SE would play their play-off games the following day, the coaches elected to give much more playing time to the less experienced members of the squad. A 6-3 loss to the South West, probably flattered the opposition, but ultimately the tactic was to prove correct in preparing the SE for the following days play-off games.

Match 4 – v- Scotland.

Day 2 of the competition meant that the SE would play 2 games to decide positions 5 to 7 in Division 2. The obvious aim for the team was to finish as high as possible.

The SE started the game with much more energy and were 4-1 up by half time. From this position, they managed the game and whilst the final score was only a 4-3 win, this did not reflect the real improvement made by the team since the previous day.

Match 5 – v- Wales.

This was a traditional Welsh team indicative of their position of previous years. Whilst well organised, they lacked experience. The SE capitalised on this, winning the game 15-2 as a result of a tight defence and high temp counter attack. With 14 seconds to go, Coach Alcorn called a time out and pushed the goal keeper– Owen Street forward for the final attack. With 1 second to go, Owen scored the final SE goal of the weekend, something which pleased all the players and the large crowd which had gathered during the morning.

The Irish team went on to win Division 2, which puts the SE's efforts into prospective. Coming 5 in Division 2 was probably not a true reflection of the quality of the SE's play. On another occasion and with a bit of luck, there is no doubt that this team could have won the division and gained promotion.

It was good to see that Owen Peel, William Gracie – Langrick, Josh Coulson and James Croud make meaningful contributions during the 2 days of competition. Being born in 2003, they now move on from age group water polo having all been stalwarts of SE Boys water polo teams for a number of years.

The coaches of the England Under 18 Academy Squad chose Jamie Bond as the SE's Most Valuable Player, although special mention should also go to Josh Luff who scored 12 goals during the weekend.

As ever the SE were supported by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable group of family and friends who made the long trip to Sheffield.