

## **SWIM ENGLAND SOUTH EAST REGION WATER POLO**

### **UNDER 16 INTER-REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS 2021**

#### **WALSALL GALA BATHS, 27 & 28 NOVEMBER**

Almost exactly two years ago, the South East region boys' team (born 2006 & younger) took part in the under 14 inter-regional championships that were also played at the Walsall Gala Baths.

We had a really encouraging event and produced a number of highly competitive performances which resulted in a 6<sup>th</sup> place finish out of the 11 teams that took part.

No one at that time would have predicted the arrival of the global pandemic that resulted in the various lock downs and no real competitive program for 12 months, but we were delighted to have the opportunity to return to Walsall for this year's event.

Fundamentally we played with the same squad that featured two years ago but with 3 significant changes that looked to have strengthened the team.

The squad was selected after a relatively small number of training sessions that were only able to recommence after the most recent lock down came to an end in June, but the coaches were really pleased that we had significant competition for places.

Our final training session took place on the Saturday before the tournament at Walsall and we spent all of the time available developing what we felt were a relatively simple but potentially effective set of tactics.

Eventually, after much deliberation, the following squad was selected; -

1. Henry Broadhurst
2. William Carter
3. Edward Cooper
4. Max Cooper
5. Tumay Evcimen
6. Ethan Lecuyer
7. Edward Moakes
8. Archie Moon
9. Felix Monaghan (Goal keeper)
10. Indy Nash
11. Maty Skoda
12. Joey Taylor
13. Matthew Williams

The under 14 competition is played in one division and the results are then used to "seed" the under 16 event which is split into two divisions. What we hadn't anticipated was being included in division 1 as a result of Ireland being unable to take part and we realised that we would be playing against the stronger regions based on the results from two years ago.

On balance, the coaches and management were agreed that we were happy to have the opportunity to see how competitive we could be when playing the "top" teams but we were also very aware that every game we played would be extremely tough.

These are the individual match reports; -

Saturday 15.30

South East 7, London 5

Quarter Scores; - 3-1, 0-2, 3-2, 1-0

We started our first match really well and scored twice from play had had come straight from the training session the week before.

After that, and even though we looked the better side, we missed chance after chance which kept London in the game.

Eventually we won the match fairly comfortably and the final score really didn't illustrate our dominance, but we were still delighted to win our first game.

Scorers; - Matt 3, Henry 2, Will 1, Indy 1.

Exclusions; - Ethan 2, Max 1, Henry 1

Saturday 18.00

South East 9, North West 12

Quarter Scores; - 3-4, 2-2, 2-2, 2-4

This was a truly remarkable match, and it's really not possible to explain what exactly took place in this report, but it is fair to say that those who witnessed it will long remember the events of this Saturday evening at the Walsall Gala Baths.

What I can say is that the team produced a fantastic performance in the most difficult of circumstances, and this narrow defeat proved to be the key game of the weekend.

Scorers; - Matt 5, Indy 2, Tumay 1, Joey 1.

Exclusions; - Henry 3, Tumay 2, Archie 2, Matt 2, Ethan 1, Max 1

On the Saturday evening all of the squad along with the coaches and the parents and supporters enjoyed the evening in a restaurant in Walsall and we knew that we still faced two further tough matches on Sunday.

Sunday 10.20

South East 8, West Midlands 3

Quarter Scores; - 2-0, 2-1, 1-2, 3-0

This was a dominant display against a strong West Midlands team who were playing at home in front of a large and very noisy crowd.

The match was relatively close for the first 3 quarters but the the final period saw our attack and defence work really well and we eventually ran out comfortable winners which kept the home support very quiet.

This proved to be our outstanding performance of the weekend and the squad deserved great credit for the way that they put the tactical plan into action.

Scorers; - Indy 3, Matt 2, Ethan 1, Henry 1, Ed M 1.

Exclusions; - Ethan 1, Ed C 1, Henry 1, Tumay 1.

Sunday 13.40

South East 6, South West 9

Quarter Scores; - 2-2, 1-2, 1-1, 2-4

We knew that a win in this match would probably guarantee our team second place in the competition with the North West remaining unbeaten

Once again, the boy's put together an excellent display but we were always trying to recover form a slow start when we conceded 2 quick goals.

Unfortunately, the team never quite played to the level that we had seen in the West Midland match and we were guilty of committing to many exclusions that really were avoidable. That said, we kept going right to the end but we all knew that we had not quite been at our best. Scorers; - Indy 3, Matt 2, Tumay 1  
Exclusions; - Tumay 3, Ed C 1, Ethan 1, Max 1.

At the end of the competition the North West remained unbeaten but with the South East, South West and West Midlands all finishing on 4 points we were delighted to be told that the official calculation meant that we had finished in second place. This is the highest position recorded by a South East boys' team at an Inter-Regional Championships, at any age group, since the change from the old Inter Districts which was around 20 years ago.

This was an excellent result and all of the squad should be very proud of the contribution they made to securing the runners up position in a very tough competition. If anything, everyone was slightly frustrated in the knowledge that we had run the North West so close and, on another day, could have probably have beaten them but circumstances had contrived against us.

The coaches made the very unusual decision that our Most Valuable Player award should be given to 3 members of the squad. Matt Williams led the scoring and was a constant menace in attack, Henry Broadhurst played every game at centre back and was in excellent form and Felix Monaghan does what he does in goal and made a number of excellent saves. But it was very much a squad game and everyone played a part in what was an excellent weekend.

We were well supported by the many families and friends who travelled to Walsall to watch the team and the coaches were very grateful for the help that was offered.

Finally, the squad was coached enthusiastically and with no little skill by Ben Curtis who took the squad to this event in the absence of Ben Alcorn who is normally the lead coach of the boy's teams. Ben A was away making his international debut playing for England in the EU nations tournament in the Czech Republic but his understudy made a what turned out to be a remarkable and memorable debut.

Alastair Roberts  
SE Region Boy's Water Polo

The picture of the squad, taken as the snow started to fall outside the pool, is as follows; - Ed C, Max, Indy, Henry, Maty, Tumay, Will, Ethan, Felix, Archie, Joey, Ed M & Matt.