

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

### **UNDER 16 (2008 & YOUNGER) INTER REGION CHAMPIONSHIPS**

#### **LIVERPOOL AQUATIC CENTRE 1<sup>ST</sup> & 2<sup>ND</sup> JULY 2023**

For the boys born in 2008 the covid pandemic denied them the opportunity of playing in the under 14 inter region event that should have taken place at the end of 2020.

As a result, this under 16 competition was the first opportunity to play in an inter region event for several of the squad who were selected after several training sessions that took place over the past few months.

The squad that represented the region was as follows; -

1. William Makepeace
2. Aiden McArragher
3. Sammy Smith
4. Aston Bennett
5. Sam Collier
6. Cassius Humphrey
7. Piaras Donnelly
8. Thomas Greenyer
9. Dominik Bullen
10. Jamie Miles
11. Sam Tredwell
12. Leon Wudarczyk
13. Ben Loffler

Normally the result of the under 14 event decides who plays in the two divisions of the under 16 competition.

Because the under 14 competition was not played all the regions (along with Scotland and Wales) took part in the tournament with the teams divided initially into two groups of five teams.

The South East were drawn in group B and would play matches on Saturday, which would be 2 x 8-minute periods, against East, North East, South West, and Wales.

Saturday 14.00

South East 4, East 2 (H-T 1-2)

The opening match was the first of several close games where we came from behind to secure a tough win against a decent opposition.

The squad defended particularly well and eventually took the chances that would secure a hard-fought win.

Scorers; - Dom 2, Sammy 1, Jamie 1.

Exclusions; - Cass 1.

Saturday 15.20

South East 4, North East 3 (H-T 2-2)

Having watched the North East play in their opening match it was obvious that they were big, strong, and well organised team who would present a real challenge.

This proved to be the case in a very exciting match where once again we came from behind to secure the win.

As in the match against the East region, the team defended well but we missed several chances that we created which made for a very exciting finish.

Ultimately a goal from Sammy with 36 seconds left proved to be the winner in what had been an excellent all-round performance.

Scorers; - Sammy 3, Dom 1.

Exclusions; - Aiden 2, Sam C 1, Tom 1, Dom 1.

Saturday 16.40

South East 7, Wales 3 (H-T 1-1)

This was match that we made very hard work of and a slow start resulted in the score being level at half time.

We eventually took control to secure a relatively comfortable win but the team knew we had not played as well as we had hoped.

That said, the three wins meant that we were in an excellent position in the group with one tough match remaining.

Scorers; - Sam C 2, Jamie 2, Leon 2, Dom 1.

Exclusions; - Sam T 2, Leon 2, Aiden 1, Aston 1.

Saturday 18.00

South East 6, South West 6 (H-T 4-3)

The final group match was against a very decent and well organised South West team and we knew that this would potentially be a very tough challenge.

This proved to be the case, but the boys put in another excellent performance to secure a very well-deserved draw.

Dom scored an excellent first half hat trick but all the squad really worked hard throughout the match to secure a valuable point.

Scorers; - Dom 3, Sammy 2, Jamie 1.

Exclusions; - Aiden 1, Cass 1.

As a result of the three wins and a draw we finished top of the group, securing a semi-final match on Sunday morning against Scotland who were runners up in the other half of the competition.

Sunday 10.30 Semi Final

South East 10, Scotland 10 (3-4, 2-1, 2-0, 3-5) Penalty Shoot Out 3-2.

The Sunday matches to decide the final places are played as 4 x 8-minute quarters and we knew that this longer format would potentially be very demanding on all the squad and this very much proved to be the case.

This was a pulsating match that we led for long periods and at 8-5 early in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter it looked as though we might have done enough to win.

Unfortunately, the Scots had other ideas and eventually they equalised shortly before the end. We still had a chance to score in the final few seconds but the goal was disallowed and so we faced the excitement of a penalty shootout.

Will had been excellent in goal in all the previous matches and he came up with the crucial saves to secure the 3-2 win.

This was another terrific performance from the team in a tough and physical game which featured 29 exclusion fouls but overall, we did enough to book our place in the final.

Scorers; - Sam C 5, Jamie 2, Aiden 1, Sammy 1, Cass 1.

Exclusions; - Sam C 3, Cass 3, Dom 2, Aiden 2, Sammy 1, Piaras 1, Jamie 1, Ben 1.

Sunday 14.30 Final

South East 12, North East 15 (1-9, 4-4, 4-1, 3-1)

As you can imagine, all the squad and supporters were delighted to have made the final where we would face the North East who we had beaten in a very close match the previous day.

What took place was a remarkable match that those who witnessed it will probably never forget.

Quite simply, we made a terrible start where we could not cope with the counter attack of the opposition and remarkably after 5 minutes the team trailed 0-9.

From this point, and with the squad showing remarkable character, we slowly started to dominate the game and at one point in the third quarter it looked as though a very unlikely comeback might be on. Unfortunately, we did not have quite enough time in the match to overcome the deficit but it was a remarkable turnaround to lose the first quarter 1-9 and then win the remainder of the match 11-6. This was very much a case of what might have been, but we could not fault the squad for the way that they battled back into the match after such a disappointing start.

Scorers; - Sam C 4, Cass 3, Dom 2, Aiden 1, Sammy 1, Tom 1.

Exclusions; - Sammy 2, Cass 2, Jamie 2, Aiden 1, Sam C 1, Tom 1, Dom 1, Sam T 1, Leon 1.

Obviously, we were disappointed to lose the final but to finish as runners up in a tough competition and secure the silver medal was a terrific achievement for the South East.

All the squad were good to work with and they tried hard to put into practice what we had worked on in training and in the numerous pre-match meetings.

Ben Curtis coached the team enthusiastically, innovatively, and with a great deal of skill and Helen Smith was always on hand as our hard-working team manager.

I would particularly like to thank all the parents who have been so supportive of the boys both in the build up to the event and after making the long trip to Liverpool.

Hopefully this will be a weekend that all of those who were there will remember for a long time.

Alastair Roberts

4<sup>th</sup> July 2023

The team photo is L-R; -

Back row; - William, Sam T, Leon, Cass, Sam C, Aston

Front row; - Piaras, Sammy, Jamie, Tom, Ben, Dom, Aiden