

Close finish at Arena Junior Inter-League Southern Final

Boldmere confirmed their status as one of the country's top swimming clubs when their current crop of Juniors (9 –12Years) battled to take 2nd place in the highly competitive ARENA sponsored Southern Area Inter-League Final at Stechford last Saturday. This outstanding performance guarantees the club a place in the National Inter-League Final - featuring the country's top eight clubs - for the third time in the last four years.

In 2010, Boldmere trailed a powerful Hillingdon by 20 points at the end of the Southern Final, but 12 months on the Boldmere youngsters demonstrated greater resilience and took the challenge all the way to the last event.

After 14 of the 49 events Boldmere led Hillingdon by 5 points - followed closely by City of Norwich, Romford, City of Derby, and Weston Super Mare. They still held the lead - albeit by a handful of points until event 43 when Hillingdon drew level - leaving both on 177 points.

Heading into the final event – the mixed 8 x 1 Freestyle Relay – with one boy and girl from each age group – Boldmere knew that a win would secure first place in the gala – even if Hillingdon finished second. From the start both clubs gave their all and the lead was never more than a few centimetres. Harriet Gordon, Ben Smith, Aristeia Knight, Taleb Givens, Kate Davies, Matt Price, Eden Harlow and Ben Stanford produced an outstanding and highly charged finish but missed out by just 0.34 seconds.

Boldmere's youngsters who excelled yet again were 9 year olds Lily Wood, Alex Bartley, Harriett Gordon, Stephanie Deathridge, Jack Bateman, Toby Chiles, Jamiroquai Sneakes, Ben Smith and James Goodwin who stole the show by winning all four of their relays – the girls smashing the 3-year old Freestyle Club Record by 1.5 seconds and winning the Medley Relay by a clear 4 metres!

Out of their 32 top three finishes, they stopped the clock first in thirteen events setting 22 Personal Bests, 6 individual Club Records and 3 relay Club Records. Four of the new Club Records were set by Matt Price who won both of his 11Yrs individual events - 50m Freestyle in 28.58 seconds and 50m Backstroke in 32.66 seconds. He then competed in Backstroke event for the 12Yrs age group taking second place and improving on his earlier time with 32.58.

His final Club Record came in the 11Yrs boys 4 x 25m Freestyle Relay when his rapid 13.30sec set up Tom Bloor, Archie Langston and "anchorman" Kai Alexander to lead the field home by a massive four seconds margin with a Club Record time of 56.67. The same quartet

romped home again in the Medley Relay to accumulate a maximum 12 points from their relays.

Other individual event winners were: Kate Davies (11Yrs 50m Fly) in a new PB, Tom Bloor (11Yrs 50m Fly) and Ben Stanford (12 Yrs 50m Free).

Two 9Yrs debutants Lily Wood and Ben Smith showed no sign of nerves in their first big event. Both achieved super second place finishes in their 25m Freestyle races in PB times of 16.94 and 16.66 respectively – with the latter recording the same time as the swimmer who was awarded first place.

Another first place finish was claimed by the 11Yrs girls' foursome of Stella-Anne O'Hehir, Lois West, Kate Davies and Lauren Wall in the Freestyle relay, and the final relay Club Record was set in the 12Yrs/under Freestyle event in which Price, Stanford, Alexander and captain Ben Campbell reduced the record by nearly a second to 54.82.

Another solid relay team performance was produced by the 10 Yrs boys' team of Karski, Palmer-Whyte, Jack Dobson, Roan Griffiths and Taleb Givans who swam an awesome anchor leg in the Freestyle to earn second place – only days after recovering from a hairline collar bone fracture.

Other Individual Personal Best times were set by Ben Smith (25m Fly), Toby Chiles (25m Breast), Francessca Goode (50m Back & Fly), Aristeia Knight (50m Free), Leighton Palmer-Whyte (50m Breast), Leo Karski (50m Back), Kai Alexander (50m Breast) and Eden Harlow (50m Fly).

Special mention must also be made of a new addition to the team - Lydia Barnsley - who provided much needed fresh legs to both the 12 year Girls Relays.

Urged on by a noisy army of supporters bedecked in red and black flags - and superbly organised by coach Nigel Kelly, team manager Mark West and chaperones Sharon Alexander and Julie Wall - the young Boldmere youngsters helped produce an amazing atmosphere and all brought great credit to the club who were praised for the professional way in which they hosted one of the country's top swimming events.

Boldmere's young stars will now be travelling to Corby for the National Final on November 27th with captains Laura Richardson and Ben Campbell hoping to improve on last years 5th place against three other clubs from the Southern Final - and the top 4 northern giants of City of Leeds, Stockport Metro, Southport and City of Newcastle.

