

# ARENA Junior Inter-League Grand Final 2011

For the second consecutive year Boldmere Swimming Club's Junior 'A' team stepped into the spotlight of the national stage last weekend as officially one of the top eight Junior teams in the country when they took their rightful place in the Arena Junior Inter-League Grand Final at Corby's International pool.

Also returning back again were six other teams from last year; the 2010 winners, the City of Leeds, the 2008 and 2009 champions, Southport Aqua, City of Derby, Hillingdon, City of Norwich, City of Newcastle and with Stockport Metro replacing City of Liverpool.

Competing against the bigger City teams was always going to be a tough task for Boldmeres' young 9 - 12 year olds and yet again they found themselves battling with Norwich. At the halfway stage Leeds were the clear leaders on 145 points ahead of Stockport Metro with only 9 points separating 3rd and Boldmere in 5th. Twelve races on, after 36 of the 49 events Boldmere had dropped to 6th, four points adrift of City of Norwich

However, the strong spirited team of 29 juniors kept their focus and in the final thirteen events managed seven top four placings with one first to claw themselves back up into 5th to pip Norwich by just one point with on 208 points - once again equalling their two previous Grand Final finishes in 2008 and 2010- a fantastic feat. Runaway champions were the City of Leeds again who, with 16 race wins amassed 321 points, some 49 points ahead of Stockport Metro.

There were thirteen top three finishes with 25 new personal best times set, four of which were new club records along with 7 sparkling relay club record performances from four quartets and the final mixed 8 leg relay.

Boldmere hit the timing pads first on four occasions with Ben Stanford getting the first individual win in the boys 12/u 50m Freestyle in cracking new club record of 27.32 well over a second ahead of second place.

Matt Price earned the other individual maximum eight pointer again in the 50m Freestyle race in the 11/u age group. Matt also took second spot in the 50m Backstroke, which, with 15 points to his name, earned the Arena Top Boy prize in the 11-year-old age group.

There were more top three finishes from Tom Bloor who finished in second place in the 11/u 50m Fly after swimming up in the 12/u age group in which he set a PB time OF 33.11. In the 9 and 10-year-old 25m and 50m Freestyle events both Ben Smith Leighton Palmer-Whyte respectively both earned 3rd place finishes and both set new best times in the process.

Other individual PB times came from first timer Lily Wood (9 Yr) 25m Free & Fly, Ben Smith (9Yr) 25m Fly, Toby Chiles (9Yr) 25m Breast, Jack Bateman (9Yr) 25m Back, Aristeia Knight (10 Yr) 50m Breast & Free, Roan Griffiths (10 Yr) 50m Fly, Leo Karski (10 Yr) 50m Back, Kai Alexander (11 Yr) 50m Breast, Eden Harlow (12 Yr) 50m Fly and finally girls captain Laura Richardson (12 Yr) 50m Free.

In the relays the 11 year old boys foursome of Kai Alexander, Tom Bloor, Matt Price and Archie Langston excelled with a super 2.5 second win in the Freestyle relay in a new Club Record of 54.69. They just missed out on the double with a second in the Medley but did set another CR.

Swimming up an age group Matt and Kai joined Ben Stanford and boy captain Ben Campbell and kept the Freestyle winning tradition by edging out Leeds by one tenth to take top spot.

Showing promise for the future the young 9-year-old girls of Alex Bartley, Stephanie Deathridge, Harriet Gordon and Lily Wood were only half a second behind first place with a cracking second in a CR of 1.05.90 in Freestyle relay.

Meanwhile the 9 year old boys of Jamiroquai Sneekes, Bateman, Chiles and Smith also set themselves a CR with a third place in the Freestyle

relay. Ben Smith also earned the accolade of joint Top Boy for the 9-year-old category for his individual performances.

The boy's 10-year team of Karski, Palmer-Whyte, Griffiths and Taleb Givans took third spot in the Medley and then the Freestyle with Jack Dobson swapping for Taleb on the latter

Also playing a valuable part of the team were Katherina Hall, Stella-Anne O'Hehir, Lois West, Kate Davies and Lydia Barnsley all who set cracking unofficial Pb's in their relay legs.

A final well done must go to Junior Head Coach Nigel Kelly and his team Manager Mark West for not only getting Junior team to the Grand Final but also for not picking up one DQ on the day or in any of five previous rounds along the way.

Many thanks must also go to the tireless support given to the swimmers and club by parents behind the scenes with special thanks to chaperones Sharon Alexander and Julie Wall for their help poolside with the team on the day.

