

Dover Lifeguards Show style at Ashford Development gala

A young and inexperienced team of Dover Lifeguard swimmers travelled to the Mote Park pool in Maidstone for the latest instalment of the development gala series. The team was peppered with some more experienced swimmers, and these swimmers were excellent role models as they showed how to perform throughout the night and helped calm the debutantes nerves and ensured all performed to their best.

The gala opened with the squadron breaststroke relay and Dover's Mollie Allen quickly opened up a lead on the first leg. This lead was to be held and extended over the following 11 legs of the relay with good swims from Dominic Wild, Kieron Menniss, Tom Latham, Callum Haywood, Tom Jefferson, Luke Menniss, Amelia Beardsmore, Grace Beer, Milly Furneaux, Abby Taylor-Baptie and Tasha Hyde. This performance was a spark to one of the best team performances in the individual swims this series has produced. Over the first block of 14 individual swims all of the 'guards swimmers produced personal best swims, with first places in 6 of the races, these came from- Tasha Hyde (18/u back), Courteney Tranter (11/0 breast), Jamie Woodard (12/u fly), Abby Taylor Baptie(15/u breast), Tom Jefferson (15/u Breast) and Sophie Waller (10/u IM). This was supported by 2nd places from Tom Russell(18/u back) and Robin Craft (9/u free). There were also speeding tickets, which are badges of honour above first place finishes for- Dominic Wild (10/u IM 1.43.64),Cameron Cooke (10/ back 46.86), and Tom Latham (11/u breast 49.45).

The next block of individual swims was also impressive with personal bests from Luke Menniss (5th 18/u breast), Sophie Waller (1st 9/u breast),Ebony Wright (1st 12/u free), Mollie Allen (1st 10/u fly), Robin Craft (3rd 10/u fly), Ella Savage (6th 15/u back), Milly Furneaux (3rd 12/u IM), and Dan Latham (4th 12/u IM). Laura Austin also produced a good swim in the 18/u fly to finish 2nd and bring in more points for the team. At the half way point of the gala there was little between the top 3 clubs and Dover were placed in 3rd breathing down the necks of the first 2 teams. The swimmers showed great determination and guts to put in more personal best performances from –Tom Jefferson(3rd 18/u Free), Dan Latham (1st 11/u fly), Callum Haywood(2nd 12/u breast), Rebecca Mercer(5th 10/u free), Conor Miller (10/u fs –speeding ticket),Amy Bacmeister(5th 15/u fly) ,Callum Bowers(2nd 15/u fly) and Tasha Hyde (18/u IM -speeding Ticket).

With a first place performance from the 9/u medley relay team of Kyle Kent, Sophie Waller,, Dominic wild and Mollie Allen the team were now joint 2nd going into the last set of individual swims.

Milly Furneaux gave the 'guards the start they needed with a fine first place in the 18/u breaststroke and her younger team mate Mollie Allen then romped home in first place in the 9/u fly. Abby Taylor Baptie also finished in first place in the 15/u freestyle in a blanket finish which saw her placed ahead of the field. Personal best swims came form –Kyle Kent (3rd 9/u fly), Callum Haywood(3rd 12/u back), Amelia Beardsmore (10/u breast-speeding ticket), Kieron Menniss(1st 10/u breast), and Lewis Young (4th 15/u free). The last set of relay swims for the night were to prove critical to the result of the gala with 3 teams now neck and neck for the first place trophy.

The 12/u medley relay team of Edith Cooke, Milly Furneaux, Jamie Woodard and Callum Haywood were in great form as they finished in first place. The 10/u Medley team of Mollie Allen, Dominic Wild, Robin Craft and Sophie Waller also swam well and were just touched out into 2nd place.

The final event of the night-the freestyle squadron relay, produced an exciting finale to the evening. The three clubs fighting for the first place trophy were neck and neck over the 12 legs with everything to swim for. The Dover team of Mollie Allen Sophie Waller, Edith Cooke, Ebony Wright, Ella Savage, Laura Austin, Dominic Wild, Conor Miller, Dan Latham,Jamie Woodard,Tom Jefferson and Luke Menniss produced a superb team performance, each swimmer pushing as hard as possible despite intense pressure from the other teams. The race finished with the Dover team just half a metre ahead amidst a deafening atmosphere.

When the points were totalled up the Dover team had finished a good 2nd place just 4 points form the first place spot. Coach Tim Hyde was optimistic for the future “ a large number of our team were debutantes tonight and others were swimming strokes they would not usually do. They all performed well and can be proud of themselves. I am proud of the team spirit they have shown and the never give up attitude has gained us lots of points this evening.”

There were awards for Best Boy- Robin Craft, Best Girl- Ebony Wright , and best overall performance for Milly Furneaux