

SUSSEX COUNTY ASA WATER POLO

UNDER 14 (95 & YOUNGER) INTER COUNTY TOURNAMENT

WHITGIFT SCHOOL, SOUTH CROYDON

SATURDAY 6TH DECEMBER 2008

For many years the Southeast and London regions have combined to run under 16 and under 19 water polo tournaments, which have always been popular with the players and parents from all the counties who have been involved.

It was decided at the start of 2008 that we would try to run for the first time a similar event but for an under 14 age group, and the inaugural tournament was played at the excellent deep water pool at Whitgift School in South Croydon.

It was slightly disappointing that only three counties chose to enter (although others are showing interest for 2009) but the event was still a great success and was enjoyed by a noisy and enthusiastic crowd.

The Sussex team was selected after a number of training sessions and trials that took place at the Triangle centre at Burgess Hill along with the St Bedes school pool. Although when the idea was first suggested we were not sure how many players we would possibly have available in this age group, we were delighted (and slightly amazed) that we started with over 40 boys and girls at the early sessions. Slowly the number was reduced by the selection process and eventually the following team was selected; -

1. Sam Wildman Worthing SC
2. Oliver Rainford Worthing SC
3. Henry Jackson Worthing SC
4. Tara Osborne Worthing SC
5. Joe Hazeldine Worthing SC
6. Nicole Tuffin Brighton SC
7. Fran Collings Haywards Heath/Burgess Hill
8. Toby Fraser Haywards Heath/Burgess Hill
9. Wesley Connellan Haywards Heath/Burgess Hill
10. Joseph Jeffries Haywards Heath/Burgess Hill
11. Lydia Thomas Brighton SC
12. Karen Chan Worthing SC
13. Laura Joseph Worthing SC

Coach; - Alastair Roberts

Assistant Coach; - Tim Fraser

The individual match reports are as follows; -

Match 1. Surrey 4, Sussex 1. (H/T 2-0)

Sussex scorer; - Joseph Jeffries 1

Exclusions; - None

The first match was a fair indication of how the tournament would progress with the Sussex youngsters playing reasonably well but conceding goals on most occasions as a result of a lack of match awareness. The team kept working hard and was rewarded with two good goals from Joseph Jeffries.

Match 2. Kent 7, Sussex 4. (H/T 3-2)

Scorers; - Joseph Jeffries 2, Toby Fraser 1, Henry Jackson 1.

Exclusions; - Sam Wildman, Wesley Connellan, Toby Fraser.

Another good match which followed a similar pattern to the first with our young team playing well but being punished on occasions for basic errors.

Match 3. Sussex 1, Surrey 5. (H/T 0-1)

Scorer; - Sam Wildman 1.

Exclusions; - None.

This was probably our poorest performance when the team struggled to get going against a strong and well-organized Surrey team. Again, naive defending cost us a number of goals and only the fine goal-keeping of Wesley Connellan kept the final score down.

Match 4. Sussex 2, Kent 6. (H/T 1-5)

Scorer; - Franny Collings 2

Exclusions; - None.

A slow start in the first half of the match was probably as a result of fatigue but the team fought back really well in the second period and probably should have scored more goals.

Although it was disappointing not to record a win, all the squad worked hard and we did see an improvement game by game. The boys and girls have a great deal to learn and for a number of them this was the first time that they had played in a "proper" tournament of this type.

On the positive side, the fact that we started the process with over 40 shows that the county is now seeing a resurgence in junior water polo and this must be good for the game in the longer term.

The task now is to raise the playing standard over the coming months and the coaches are determined to utilize the excellent opportunities afforded by the Sunday sessions at St Bedes to act as the basis of this process.

Alastair Roberts

8th November 2008.