

## Godalming win round one of Rother League

Godalming Swimming Club were in commanding form as they swept to victory in round one of the Rother League on Saturday night at the Broadwater Leisure centre. Godalming were hosting clubs from Sutton, Winchester, Alton, Gosport and the Isle of Wight. Team Manager Paul Nash had made sure the club had its strongest side out for what he knew would be a tough battle "The Rother is always a tough competition and to do well I knew we needed to be at our best".

Jessica Balchin and Jonathan Wade got Godalming off to a great start winning the first two events the girls and boys open 50m Butterfly and from then on Godalming were always in front. Luke Brooks smashed his personal best winning the under 11 boys 50m backstroke in 44.77 seconds and new personal bests from Ellie Cooper in the under 15 girls butterfly and George White in the under 13 boys 50m breast stroke meant that Godalming stayed out in front. The experienced Megan White kept her nerve to win the touch in the open girls 50m breaststroke so that after 10 events Godalming were in 1<sup>st</sup> place on 52 points, just ahead of Gosport on 45 and the Isle of Wight on 35.

The Godalming youngsters played their part with Innes Perry setting a new personal best of 18.93 seconds in the under 11 girls 25m butterfly and Henry Barella snatching a win in the boys race in a new best time of 19 seconds. Everything was going right for Godalming with Adam Bagley racing through to win the under 15 boys 50m breaststroke before Jasmine Balchin powered to the under 11 girls 50m freestyle. Head Coach Jon White could sense that it was a special night "I hadn't expected us to start so well and knew that with the relays coming up we stood a good chance". Coach White's faith in his team was rewarded straight away with a string of four consecutive relay wins. The under 11 girls and boys teams dominated their races with the girls team of Innes Perry, Emily Bagley, Lola Wright and Jasmine Balchin winning both the freestyle and medley relays and the boys team of Joseph Fulton, Henry Barella, Charlie Needell and Luke Brooks also winning both their races. The under 15s were also on top form winning both medley relay races with Sophie Quitman, Alice Wright, Ellie Cooper and Gabrielle Morgan winning girls race and Kieran Nash, Adam Bagley, Andrew Oakey and Oliver Barella winning the boys race. The older boys then stepped up to the blocks and in an awesome display of power swimming the Godalming team of Jonathan Wade, James Andrews, Daniel and Jamie Oakey were miles ahead winning the medley relay in 58.39 seconds. This meant that at the halfway stage after 26 events Godalming on 133 points had started to pull away from Gosport on 104 points with the Isle of Wight a distant 3<sup>rd</sup> on 87 points.

Coach White knew his swimmers had to keep their heads otherwise a couple of disqualifications would soon see the gap close. He needn't have worried because Sophie Quitman carried her relay form through into the individual races winning the under 15 girls 50m backstroke before Megan White blazed to a new personal best of 1:15.85 in the open girls 100m individual medley. Emily Bagley and Gabrielle Morgan kept Godalming on the right track with wins in the 50m breaststroke and freestyle before Bruce Perry rounded off the individual races with a win in the boys under 13 50m butterfly. In the final set of relay races the under 13 boys team of Guy Woodhouse, George White, Bruce Perry and Gabriel Byrne closed out a hard fought victory in the free style relay before the traditional end of gala 8 x 25m squadron freestyle relay involving boys and girls from each age group. The crowd at Broadwater went wild when the young Godalming swimmers of Innes Perry, Luke Brooks, Danielle Brooks and Bruce Perry built up a halfway lead before the more experienced Sophie Quitman, Adam Bagley, Marissa Nash and Jamie Oakey made no mistakes in finishing it off with a victory.

When the points were added up Godalming were way out in front in 1<sup>st</sup> place on 244 points with Gosport 2<sup>nd</sup> on 217 and the Isle of Wight 3<sup>rd</sup> on 170. Team manager Nash was over the moon with his team "A great team performance like this shows why Godalming is such a fantastic club to swim for. We were up against some great clubs but led from the start and were strong throughout. I am really proud of our swimmers; we had loads of personal bests and dominated the relays. A fantastic night".