

Richmond Dales Back to Pool Gala 17th/18th September, Durham

49 members of the Middlesbrough Swimming Club took part in the traditional opening gala of the 2016/2017 season, the Richmond Dales Back to Pool Gala held at Freeman's Quay Durham.

As usual, the racing was very competitive, particularly in all the girls' races with high numbers in each age group. 15 other clubs were competing along with Middlesbrough.

One of the highlights of this Gala is the skins event. The age categories for these events are 12years and under and 13years and over. Both boys and girls races are held with the six qualifiers determined from the results of the relevant 200IM races. The qualifiers then compete over 50metres using the stroke randomly drawn by the referee. The slowest competitor is eliminated and a further race held, again using the stroke that is randomly drawn, this time by the eliminated swimmer. Races are held at three minute intervals until a winner is determined. As expected great excitement was generated throughout each race as supporters of the competitors spurred them on.

In the girls' races, Middlesbrough swimmers did very well with Ellie Baister qualifying for the girls 12years and under and in the 13years and over Sarah Reay (gold age group event), Rachel Bradley (gold age group event) and Olivia McAvoy – very well done. In the boys' events, the competition was particularly fierce and unfortunately no Middlesbrough swimmers qualified although, in the 10years age group both Thomas McDermott (gold) and Toma Saha (bronze) did very well and in the 11year age group Chase Darby finished 4th in his heat. In the 13years age group Cade Darby won bronze in a PB with Oliver Hall in 4th. It augurs well for the future.

In the single stroke events Middlesbrough swimmers did exceptionally well achieving 31 gold, 40 silver and 34 bronze medals. 112 PBs were achieved and considering that the swimmers have just returned from a three week break this was very creditable.

A breakdown and highlights of the age groups is as follows:

Girls 9 years

Abigail Stephenson, Angie Zhu and Elisha Rhodes took part in 18 events throughout the weekend, all three achieving notable performances with 15 PBs and 6 medals between them. Abigail in her first gala since turning 9years in August won 3 silvers (200m free and back and 50m back) and a bronze (50m free), Angie swam a great 200IM to win a bronze in a PB and Elisha smashing her PB by 9seconds to win bronze in the 200m backstroke.

Boys 9 years

Lewis Horner represented the boys and competed in 3 events achieving a well-deserved treble, a gold a silver and a bronze, all in PBs.

Girls 10 years

Emelia Rhodes, Evie Dilley, Hannah Redshaw, Marrisona Grieves, Millie Bozbayir and Violet Hearfield all had very creditable performances against stiff opposition in their individual races, with Emelia (obviously spurred on by her sister's performance) knocking 6.5 seconds off her 100m breaststroke PB. Evie won 3 golds (winning the 200m free by some 8 seconds) and a silver; Hannah an excellent 200IM knocking 6 seconds off her PB; Marrisona a great 100m back knocking 12 seconds off her PB. Millie won a silver, in a very competitive 100m back and a bronze (PB) and Violet a silver in the 50m breaststroke (just pipped by a much older girl) and 2 bronze.

Boys 10 years

Thomas McDermott, Toma Saha and William Morris all had great races, with Thomas having an exceptional meet with 7 golds and a silver and 6 PBs. Toma won 3 gold, 3 silver and 3 bronze medals (probably entering the most events by an individual (11), where does he get his stamina?). William swam on the Sunday and won a bronze in the 100m fly.

Girls 11 years

Our girls Bethan Palfreeman, Daisy Muirfield, Ellie Baister, Isabella Montague, Louise-Emma Williams and Megan Cairns all competed admirably under the stiff competition achieving 15 PBs. Unfortunately for Bethan she had a severe asthma attack and her racing was curtailed, we wish her a speedy recovery. Daisy had an excellent 200m breaststroke and knocked 9 seconds off her PB. Ellie had an exceptional meet with 7 PBs resulting in 2 golds, 2 silver and 3 bronze medals.

Boys 11 years

Chase Darby and George Bashford represented the club in the boys 11 years age group. Chase won 1 silver medal along with 5 bronze medals with 1 PB and George had a great 200m backstroke knocking 7 seconds off his PB.

Girls 12 years

Chloe Bashford, Chloe Matthewman, Ellie Tibbett, Emma Bell, Rebecca Keetley and Sadie Dickinson helped maintain a strong Middlesbrough presence. Chloe Bashford, in her 2 races had 2 PBs and Chloe Matthewman won a silver medal in the difficult 200m fly knocking 8 seconds off her PB. Ellie had a great swim in the 200m backstroke to win gold in a PB as well as a silver in the 100m backstroke. Emma and Rebecca had a terrific race in the 200m freestyle with both finishing with PBs and Rebecca just winning the gold in the last couple of metres with Emma the silver. A great race well done. Sadia had a great race in winning the 50m breaststroke.

Girls 13 years

Danielle Horner clinched a silver in a competitive 100m backstroke, Eva Finley had a number of creditable swims and Rachel Bradley some great performances to win 3 golds, 2 silver and a bronze as well as her great gold medal swim in the 200IM.

Boys 13 years

I am unsure what the parents of these boys have been feeding them but Cade Darby, Jack Atkinson, Nathan Campling and Oliver Hall all achieved outstanding PBs with Cade achieving 8, resulting in 2 golds, 2 silver and a bronze. Jack had 8, Nathan 6 and Oliver 7 resulting in 1 silver and 2 bronze medals. Congratulations to all of them and keep it up.

Girls 14 years

Probably the very best race of the meet was provided by Emma Muirhead, Georgia Stockdale and Robyn Dickinson. It was only the 3rd Event of the meet when the three locked horns in the 50m freestyle. In an epic race, Georgia (gold) prevailed with Emma (silver) and Robyn (bronze) fractions of a second behind. A treat for the spectators.

In their other races, Emma won 1 silver, Georgia 2 golds, 2 silvers and 3 bronzes and Robyn 2 golds and 2 silvers.

Boys 14 years

Adam Williams and Joseph Micklewright both did well in this age group with Adam clocking 5 PBs to win 2 silver and a bronze and Joseph 3 PBs to win 4 bronze.

Girls 15 years and over

As one can appreciate this is probably one of the most competitive groups with the ages of the girls ranging from 15 to 20. Consequently, Flora Finley (15), Lucy Turnbull (16), Olivia McAvoy (16) and Sarah Reay (16) were up against it. However, they were not put off with Flora swimming competitively in all her events, Lucy winning a bronze in the 200m fly, Olivia doing very well to win a bronze in the 100m fly and a silver in the 200m free and Sarah an outstanding performance in the 50m breast stroke to win by 2/100ths of a second for a gold to go with her great gold in the 200IM as well as a silver (200 back) and bronze (200 breast).

Boys 15 years and over

As mentioned this age group is extremely competitive and therefore Jack Cassell (15), Joseph Carter (16), Liam Bolland (17), Mohamed Hai (18) and Scott Jenkinson (16) needed to be on their "A Game" and we were not to be disappointed. Jack swam 2 PBs, Joseph won a bronze (100m fly), Liam 2 golds (100 and 200 breast), Mohamed a silver (50m breast) and Scott a gold (200m fly) and a silver (100m fly).

As commented at the outset, the competition was extremely strong and as a consequence ALL MIDDLESBROUGH COMPETITORS SHOULD BE PROUD OF THEIR PERFORMANCES- a great start to the new season.

As a spectator I was particularly taken with the comradery displayed amongst the Middlesbrough Swimmers and the support they give to their team mates when they were competing. Encouragement and belief are a great attribute to a swimmer so KEEP IT UP.

Lastly I am sure the swimmers would want to thank their parents for all the support they give, as well as a big thank you to Tom and Joe for their coaching, encouragement and motivational skills.