

City of Leeds
celebrate their victory

City of Leeds are now the team to beat after winning the Arena Junior Inter-League final for the third year running. **Roger Guttridge** reports from the Corby International Pool. Pictures by **Steve Harlow**



Three in a row



Clockwise from left: Top 12-year-old girl Abigail Burton (City of Leeds); Supporters soak up the atmosphere during the warm-up; City of Peterborough's Rachel Wellings is delighted with her win in the 12/u backstroke; Swim Bournemouth enjoy their debut in the national final



'We have a very large city to take the good kids from but every year it's getting harder for us. After winning three years running, we've become the target club. The other kids relish beating us in the individual events. But ours use that to swim faster'

City of Leeds completed a hat-trick of national junior league titles with another resounding victory at the Arena-sponsored inter-league final. Just four years after setting out on their junior league journey by entering their local White Rose League for the first time, the North of England champions made it three in a row at national level at Corby. And despite age group coach Craig Robinson's belief that the chasing clubs are closing the gap, the evidence was less convincing. Although Leeds precisely matched their 2011 points tally with 321, their margin of victory was greater - 77 compared to 51 points last year and 48 in 2010. 'We have a very large city to take the good kids from,' said Robinson. 'But every year it's going to get harder for us, I think. After winning three years running, we have become the target club. The other clubs relish beating us in the individual events. But our children use that to try and swim faster and better. This year was the first time we have won the cannon relay.' He added: 'All credit to the other clubs that

come here and chase us every year. The kids love being here. We all love the atmosphere. It's one of our favourite events. But we have to qualify first. The White Rose League is one of the hardest because we are up against City of Sheffield. They push us really hard.'

Records broken
Leeds started as they meant to continue, winning the first three events and breaking the competition records in the first two thanks to the 12/u girls' and boys' 4x50m medley teams. In total they were responsible for seven of the 10 records broken in the final, including individual marks set by Liam Birrell in the 11/u 50m butterfly and 12/u swimmers Harry Devlin (50m breaststroke) and Abigail Burton (50m butterfly). The records broken by Birrell and Devlin were set in 1998 and 1999 respectively by City of Liverpool's Michael Rock, now a double Olympian. Burton also collected the 12yrs top swimmer and the overall best record-breaker awards and added a second win in the 50m freestyle while team-mate Benjamin Rayner was named best 10-year-old boy after winning his age group's 50m freestyle and butterfly. Birrell shared >





‘We have taken on these big city clubs and come second. We’re like a feeder club to some of them’



Clockwise from above: Oliver Church was a member of Northampton's winning 9yrs relay team; goggle trouble - but still victory - for Northampton's Chris Leeke; Ben 'Jovi' Rayner powers to victory for Leeds; Boldmere girls Defne Balu, Erin Davies and Abbey Turnbull; Peterborough's top 10-year-old Amelia Monaghan

◀ the top 11yrs boy award.

Leeds' 19 wins also included victories by Ella Cowan in the 9yrs 25m freestyle and breaststroke, Tia Ward in the 9yrs 25m backstroke, Viktoria Gnantt in the 10yrs 50m backstroke, Eleanor Jones in the 11/u 50m freestyle, Sophie Hobbah in the 11/u 50m breaststroke and 12/u breaststrokers Layla Black and Harry Devlin.

‘Brilliant result’

Hillingdon, one of only two finalists from anywhere south of Birmingham, went one better than last year to finish as runners-up after a close battle with Preston.

‘It’s a brilliant result,’ said coach Lesley Westendorp. ‘We have taken on these big city clubs and come second. We’re like a feeder club

to some of them - we selected 35 swimmers from 48 or 50. Our swimmers worked really well as a team and our results were amazing. It was a really good result and a good team effort.’

She added: ‘It’s about time the South started getting noticed.’

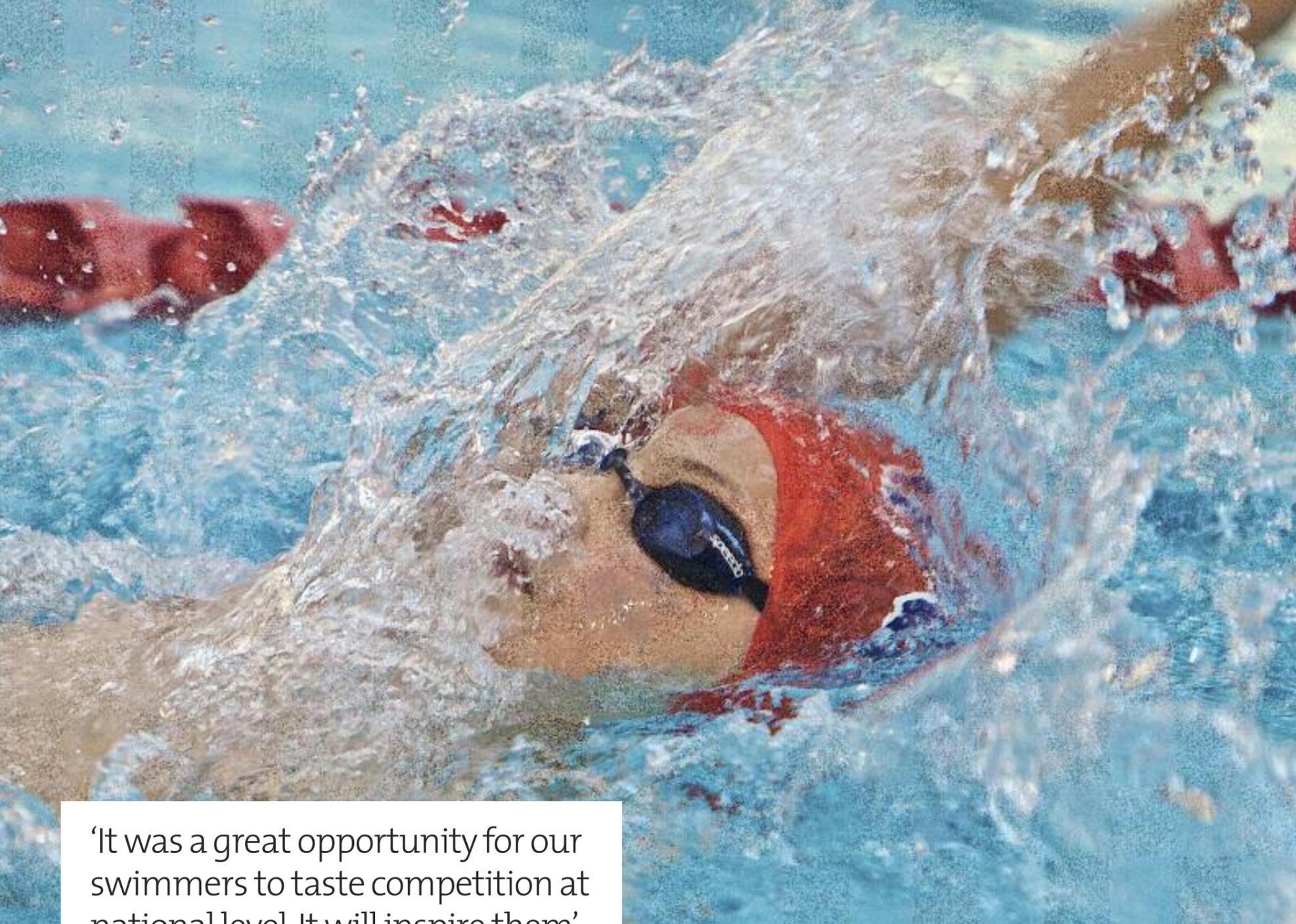
The west London club’s accolades included top age group awards for Ruby Fraser and Brodie Judge, who were both double winners, Fraser taking the 9yrs 25m freestyle and butterfly, Judge the 11/u 50m backstroke and fly. Emily McCarthy won the 10yrs 50m freestyle.

Two wins in the last block of relays helped Hillingdon to pull away from Preston, whose first national junior league final for 20 years ended in a commendable third place. William Dewhurst was one of Preston’s four winners, and his victory in the 11/u 50m backstroke gave him 50

per cent of the age group award. The North West Micro Junior League champions’ three other winners were Nathan Smith in the 10yrs 50m breaststroke, James Parker in the 11/u 50m breaststroke and the 10/u boys’ medley team.

Oldest league

Northampton, champions of the country’s oldest ‘diddy’ league, the 60-team Nuneaton and District Junior League, produced a clean sweep of the 9yrs boys’ events, which provided all six of the team’s race wins. Edward Mildred was named top nine-year-old boy and top male record-breaker following his wins in the 9yrs 25m freestyle and butterfly. Christopher Leeke won the 9yrs breaststroke, Oliver Church the backstroke and this trio were joined by Jack Gartside to win both relays. ▶



'It was a great opportunity for our swimmers to taste competition at national level. It will inspire them'



Kings of the slogan

A new final meant a new wording for Stockport Metro, the kings of the teeshirt slogan. 'Scream if you want me to swim faster,' was the message on their backs this time. They couldn't match last year's second place, however, finishing four points behind Northampton in fifth place, though a brace of disqualifications in consecutive relays towards the end probably cost them fourth.

Perennial award winner Dylan Arzoni was one of their stars, claiming the trophy for the top 12-year-old boy through his victories in the 12/u 50m freestyle and backstroke. Their other three wins came in the 10yrs age group - from Huw Williams in the 10yrs 50m backstroke, Rebecca Pearson in the 50m butterfly and the boys' 10/u boys' freestyle relay.

Just 14 points covered the four teams placed

from fourth to seventh, among them Boldmere, whose sixth place was one lower than last year. They had their moments, though, not least from the 12/u boys' team of Kai Alexander, Thomas Bloor, Archie Langston and Matt Price, who set a new meet record in the 4x25m freestyle relay 12 months after setting the 11/u record. Their other win came from Lily Wood in the 10yrs 50m freestyle.

Star swimmer

Junior final debutants City of Peterborough finished just four points behind the regulars from Boldmere and only 14 behind fourth-placed Northampton. But for a couple of disqualifications, they could have finished a place or two higher. Amelia Monaghan was their star swimmer, winning the award for the top 10yrs girl following her victory in the 10yrs 50m

breaststroke. Rachel Wellings provided a second win in the 12/u 50m backstroke.

Electric atmosphere

Three disqualifications did not help Southern Junior League champions Swim Bournemouth's cause as they became the first South West club for several years to make it to the national final. They had to settle for eighth place but head coach Emma Richards vowed to be back.

'It was a fantastic day,' she said. 'The team spirit was electric and the swimmers enjoyed every minute. It was a great opportunity for our youngsters to taste competition at national level and something that I hope will inspire them in their journey as swimmers.'

Ben Samuel's win in the 11/u 50m freestyle meant that all eight teams recorded at least one race victory. >

Clockwise from above: Preston's William Dewhurst shared the 11yrs top swimmer award; 'Go Hillingdon'; Stockport Metro's top 12-year-old Dylan Arzoni; Boldmere's Lily Wood is delighted with her victory in the 10yrs freestyle; Preston's Nathan Smith wins the 10yrs breaststroke



Parent power

Mums and dads tell *Swimming Times* about the role of the 'swimming parent'

Rob Langston, dad of Archie and Sol Langston (Boldmere):

'Every parent is a special part of the team. They are not just ferrying them to and from training and competitions. They know all the times and the lifetime best performances.'

'As a parent you are supporting them with their diet. At 12 years old they are eating like elite athletes and training six days a week. We are up at 5am on a Saturday and 4am on a Thursday.'

'If you are not committed, your child will not win and will not be part of a team like this. Every parent in this building is 110 per cent committed to their children. It's an amazing sport in that respect.'



Sarah Church (below), mum of Oliver Church (Northampton)

'I think this is a fantastic opportunity for all the children. For the younger ones, this is a major competition. It's an encouragement to the young ones and it shows them what a fantastic sport it is and how they can achieve. It's also a chance for the coaches to bring them out and see what they can do.'



Caroline Norman, mum of Harvey Norman (City of Peterborough)

'It's the first time we have done the junior league final and the kids are excited about it. COPS have come so far and for such a small club we do really well.'

'Swimming keeps us busy. My husband is on the committee and our 16-year-old daughter swims as well. So your whole life is about swimming. Any swimming parent knows how it is. You get up at 5am, you're a taxi service and everything. And the cost of some swimsuits is horrendous.'



Phil Barratt (below), dad of Sophie Barratt (Swim Bournemouth)

'The kids are excited about this. They've been really looking forward to the final. It's nice to get behind them and give them all the support you can.'



Kendra Bell (above), mum of Ethan Bell (Swim Bournemouth):

'A lot of us have younger children and it's really inspirational for the little ones to watch and soak up the atmosphere.'



Award winners (from top, l-r): runners-up Hillingdon; third placed Preston captains Kenan Yeung and Elissa Gornall; age group winners Dylan Arzoni and Abigail Burton; Edward Mildred and Ruby Fraser; Ben Rayner and Amelia Monaghan; William Dewhurst, Brodie Judge and Liam Birrell; Leeds captains Abigail Burton and Euan Cowan; top record breakers Abigail Burton and Edward Mildred

ARENA JUNIOR INTER-LEAGUE FINAL CORBY, NOVEMBER 25 2012 RESULTS AND AWARDS

OVERALL RESULT

1	City of Leeds	321
2	Hillingdon	244
3	Preston	227
4	Northampton	208
5	Stockport Metro	204
6	Boldmere	198
7	City of Peterborough	194
8	Swim Bournemouth	158

TOP RECORD-BREAKER AWARDS

Edward Mildred (Northampton) 9yrs 25m freestyle 14.77
Abigail Burton (City of Leeds) 12yrs 50m butterfly 30.69

TOP SWIMMER AWARDS

9yrs
Edward Mildred (Northampton)
Ruby Fraser (Hillingdon)
10yrs
Benjamin Rayner (City of Leeds)
Amelia Monaghan (City of Peterborough)
11yrs
William Dewhurst (Preston) & Liam Birrell (City of Leeds)
Brodie Judge (Hillingdon)
12yrs
Dylan Arzoni (Stockport Metro)
Abigail Burton (City of Leeds)

LEAGUE FINAL RECORDS

Boys	
9yrs	
Edward Mildred (Northampton) 25m freestyle	14.77
Northampton (O Church, J Gartside, C Leeke, E Mildred)	
4x25m freestyle relay	1:01.80
11/u	
Liam Birrell (City of Leeds) 50m butterfly	31.81
12/u	
Harry Devlin (City of Leeds) 50m breaststroke	34.38
City of Leeds (T Kitching, H Devlin, E Cowan, J Stott)	
4x25m medley relay	57.71
Boldmere (M Price, A Langston, T Bloor, K Alexander)	
4x25m freestyle relay	52.61

Girls	
12/u	
Abigail Burton (City of Leeds) 50m butterfly	30.69
City of Leeds (J Manning, L Black, A Mason, A Burton)	
4x25m medley relay	57.98
City of Leeds (J Manning, L Black, A Burton, A Mason)	
4x25m freestyle relay	53.89

Mixed	
8x25m freestyle cannon	
City of Leeds (J Turner, T Ward, B Rayner, K Russell, L Birrell, E Jones, T Kitching, A Burton)	1:55.85