



CHAMPIONS: The triumphant Hoddesdon Fish team celebrate with the Peanuts League division three shield. (s)

Hoddesdon claim memorable victory

HODDES DON Swimming Club's Fish team recorded a memorable victory in the final round of the Herts Peanuts League to clinch the division three title and promotion to division two.

Wins in the previous two rounds had put them in contention but they faced stiff competition from Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City in the final gala at Haileybury College.

After a nailbiting contest, Hoddesdon triumphed on the night by just a single point to take the title.

Delighted team manager Mark Charles told the Mercury: "It's a fantastic achievement. A lot of the swimmers are inexperienced but they've all done brilliantly over the three rounds.

"I was hopeful they would get promotion because there are some good swimmers in the team and I knew we'd have a chance.

"But it was very close. The final gala was exciting and the team did fantastically well. Welwyn and Letchworth pushed us hard."

After the first 10 events of the final gala just one point separated Hoddesdon from second-placed Welwyn.

Wins and personal bests from Shona

Costello (under-11 25m freestyle), Holly Charles (25m butterfly) and Jordan Icelli (under-12 25m backstroke) secured the points, along with good swims by Harry Burtenshaw and Lydia Poole.

Kane Hagley-King (under-12 25m freestyle) and Jordan Blair (under-13 25m backstroke) won their events to extend Hoddesdon's lead.

The relays were successful for Hoddesdon with the under-11 girls' team of Holly Charles, Roya Keswick, Francesca Bannon and Shona Costello winning their medley and freestyle races.

The under-13 team of Chloe Verrier, Jessica Merulla, Jordan Blair and Charlotte Cole followed up with first in the medley and second in the freestyle.

The boys' team of Harry Burtenshaw, Chris Smith, Jordan Icelli and Kane Hagley-King won the under-12 and under-13 freestyle races and were second in the under-13 medley.

But at the halfway stage Hoddesdon led Welwyn by just one point, with Letchworth six points behind.

Roya Keswick and Charlotte Cole eased Hoddesdon's nerves with wins in the under-

11 25m breaststroke and the under-11 25m butterfly respectively. Cole also finished second in her 25m freestyle race.

Francesca Bannon won her under-11 25m backstroke race and Jordan Icelli was first in the under-12 25m butterfly.

Two new personal bests and a win for Chris Smith in the under-12 25m breaststroke secured him the Swimmer of the Gala award and kept Hoddesdon in front.

Sarah Cutts (under-12 25m butterfly) and Ben Masters (under-11 25m backstroke) both set new personal bests, so the final result rested on the relays.

Good swims in the under-nine races by Emily James, Eliza Thornton, Cameron Icelli, Eliza Barrett-Holman, Sam Blair, George Napier, Cameron Bell and Thomas Scott secured valuable points and ensured Hoddesdon were winners on the night, and overall champions.

Also playing a big part in the team's fortunes were Oliver Shasha, Daniel Rowe, Richard Platt, Celia Wighton and Leoni Sibthorpe who all swam in the relays.

Gala result: 1. Hoddesdon 83pts; 2. Welwyn Garden City 84; 3. Letchworth 102; 4. Cheshunt B 152.