

## **SUPER START TO SWIM SEASON**

Forest Feast sponsored Banbridge ASC Swimmers met old friends and rivals Ballymena ASC, in the first Provincial Towns League( PTL) Gala of the season, at Banbridge Leisure Centre on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September. After all the excitement and success of last season, leading to promotion to PTL Division 2, swimmers were left with little time to regain fitness and prepare for increased competition in this new Division.

With the normal high level of anticipation and the viewing gallery packed to capacity the gala kicked off promptly with new Group A swimmers Olivia Knox and Bethany Wilson-Parry joining Jodi Doyle and Elli Robinson in the Medley relay. The visiting side were stronger on the night and the girls had to settle for second place. Ross Johnston, Patrick McNiff, Caolan Quinn and Michael Rafferty showed great form for Group A boys with a convincing win. In Group B Jenny Wilson, Esmée Hall, Poppy Robinson and Megan McKenna displayed a great team effort to take a win as did the Group B boy's team with Declan Loy, Robert Lyttle, Sam Farson and Lewis Houston. Heather Wilson, Kate Farson, Kayleigh Hamill and Lucy Stevenson swam well for Group C girls but were not able to match the pace of Ballymena but Conor Morgan, Daniel Battersby, Cameron McDonald and club newcomer Graham Stevenson were more than convincing with a great win for Group C boys. In Group D Nina Mulligan, Fionnuala Loy, Catherine Downey and Pauline Downey swam valiantly as did Jordan Davies, Patrick Morgan, Nathan McDonald and Matthew McDonald but the opposition was too strong preventing the home team a win in either section. With the opening relays complete the points were all square with the tension mounting going into the individual events.

In 50M Backstroke Jodi Doyle was back on familiar territory with first place for Group A girls with Olivia Knox in fourth. Ross Johnston showed great form to take first place for the Group A boys with teammates Caolan Quinn and Patrick McNiff securing maximum points with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. Group B continued in winning form with Megan McKenna in 1<sup>st</sup> and Jenny Wilson 2<sup>nd</sup> and Robert Lyttle 1<sup>st</sup> and Lewis Houston 2<sup>nd</sup> for the boys. In Group C Kate Farson and Heather Wilson pulled out all the stops to secure 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place against stiff competition and Cameron McDonald had a great win with Graham Stevenson in fourth for Group C boys. In Group D Catherine Downey had a fantastic swim to take 2<sup>nd</sup> place with Fionnuala Loy in fourth for the girls and Jordan Davies was fourth for the boys.

The 50M backstroke event allowed Banbridge to take the lead in points over Ballymena by the narrowest of margins with everything to swim for coming into Event 17, 50 M Breaststroke. Group A girls got off to the ideal start with Jodi Doyle winning by a huge margin and Elli Robinson in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Patrick McNiff kept the momentum going with another convincing win followed by David Houston in 2<sup>nd</sup>.for Group A Boys. Esmée Hall secured 2<sup>nd</sup> place and Jenny Wilson 4<sup>th</sup> against stiff competition in Group B for the girls and Robert Lyttle was back in winning form followed by Declan Loy in 2<sup>nd</sup> for the boys. Kate Farson and Kayleigh Hamill secured 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place points for the Group C Girls and Graham Stevenson and Daniel Battersby took 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> for Group C Boys. In Group

D points were hard to come by as a result of the strength of the visiting team but Fionnuala Loy secured 3<sup>rd</sup> place for the girls and Jordan Davies 4<sup>th</sup> for the boys.

In 50M Butterfly Elli Robinson had a strong swim to take 2<sup>nd</sup> place with Jodi Doyle in 3<sup>rd</sup> for Group A Girls. Caolan Quinn had a fantastic win for Group A boys supported by Patrick McNiff in 2<sup>nd</sup> place and Michael Rafferty in 3<sup>rd</sup> to take maximum points in a phenomenal team effort. In Group B Megan McKenna gave a text book performance to take first place with Poppy Robinson in 3<sup>rd</sup> and Lewis Houston swam strongly to take first place for the boys with Sam Farson in 2<sup>nd</sup> and Neil Kilpatrick in 3<sup>rd</sup>. Group C kept the points rolling in with Kate Farson in 2<sup>nd</sup> and Heather Wilson in 3<sup>rd</sup> for the girls and Conor Morgan 2<sup>nd</sup> and Graham Stevenson 3<sup>rd</sup> for the boys. In group D Fionnuala Loy took 3<sup>rd</sup> place and Nina Mulligan 4<sup>th</sup> and Jordan Davies also secured 3<sup>rd</sup> place for the Group D boys.

The highly competitive 50M Front Crawl event saw Group A girls Jodi Doyle and Elli Robinson in 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place and the unstoppable Group A Boys taking first, second and third with Caolan Quinn, Adam Bell and Michael Rafferty. In group B Megan McKenna and Jenny Wilson had to settle for 2<sup>nd</sup> and third while Robert Lyttle was back in winning form with Lewis Houston in 2<sup>nd</sup> and Declan Loy in 3<sup>rd</sup>. Heather Wilson had a great swim to take 2<sup>nd</sup> place in Group C with Kate Farson in 3<sup>rd</sup> and Cameron McDonald was also second for Group C boys with Graham Stevenson in 3<sup>rd</sup>. Group D brought the 50 M Frontcrawl event to conclusion with 3<sup>rd</sup> place for Fionnuala Loy and 4<sup>th</sup> going to Nina Mulligan for the girls and Jordan Davies finished with third place for the boys.

With the Starter keeping the gala moving at a very fast pace there was hardly time to draw breath between events with swimmers taking to the blocks for the last of the individual events in the 4 x 25M Individual Medley. In Group A Jodi Doyle was back in first place followed by Elli Robinson in 4<sup>th</sup> with Group A boys finishing their flawless individual performances with Caolan Quinn in 1<sup>st</sup> place, Patrick McNiff in 2<sup>nd</sup> and Michael Rafferty 3<sup>rd</sup>. Group B girls Esmée Hall and Megan McKenna had to settle for 2<sup>nd</sup> and third but Robert Lyttle and Neil Kilpatrick pulled out all the stops to take first and second. In Group C Kate Farson and Lucy Mulligan were 2<sup>nd</sup> and fourth and Graham Stevenson was first and Cameron McDonald third for Group C boys. Group D completed their highly competitive individual events with third place for Fionnuala Loy and fourth for Jordan Davies.

With the home team giving their supporters everything to cheer about the noise level and the sense of anticipation in the Leisure Centre rose to fever pitch coming into the last event, the Freestyle Relay. With Group A Girls back on the blocks Bethany, Olivia, Elli and Jodi gave 100% but were beaten by the visiting team by the narrowest of margins. Group A boys Patrick, Adam, Michael and Caolan kept Banbridge in contention with another convincing win and valuable points. Group B Girls Poppy, Esmée, Jenny and Megan were on a mission to win as were the Group B Boys Neil, Lewis, Declan and Robert who were convincing with a huge 20 second margin over Ballymena. Group C girls Lucy, Kayleigh, Kate and Heather put heart and soul into a fantastic win as did the Group C boys Michael, Conor, Graham and Cameron. Group D finished a challenging

night with second place for Nina, Fionnuala, Catherine and Pauline for the girls and Jordan, Patrick, Nathan and Matthew for the boys.

Where Banbridge had performed extremely well throughout the night, and looked strong as a team as a result of the welcome return of long term club members joined by some outstanding newcomers, there was no certainty of a win until announced by club chairman Trevor Wylie. Trevor welcomed the visitors and made reference to the home advantage which on this occasion saw Banbridge win by 582 points to Ballymena's 562. Where it is anticipated that PTL will be challenging in Division 2, victory over Ballymena is the perfect start to the new season and swimmers will look forward to meeting Lurgan away on 17<sup>th</sup> October.

For further information on Banbridge Amateur Swimming club visit our website on [www.banbridgeasc.co.uk](http://www.banbridgeasc.co.uk).