

Junior Arena League 2017 Report

Basildon confirmed their status as one of the Region's top swimming clubs when their current crop of Juniors (9 –12years) battled to take 3rd place overall in the highly competitive National Junior Arena League M11 division Final at Barnet. This performance at the home of Barnet Copthall SC capped off an impressive run in the Arena League which saw Basildon achieve a runners up spot in the first round, a first place in the second round then a battling fourth place in the final, which gave us a third place finish overall.

In the last 3 years, our Basildon juniors have progressed from the bottom of the second division in the competition, to our current position where we are able to hold our own against the best in the league. With a full strength squad and a pool that suits the swimmers, Basildon are on a par with the powerhouse teams from Camden Swiss Cottage, Barnet Copthall and Cambridge. The team finished as the highest placed Essex club.



The journey to the final in Barnet saw our youngsters chalk up a total of 35 first places over the three rounds, 15 of those coming at Basildon pool in April where we finished a very creditable second place. We followed that up with a storming points win at Southbury pool in May before the Barnet final which saw us hit the top spot in 9 races. Our swimmers proved that they could work together as a team and support each other when it counts. There were some magnificent swims from the team with most swimmers achieving pb's in their individual events and all fought for each point and never gave up until the finish. Every swimmer contributed to our overall success.

The youngsters from Basildon were spurred on by the noisy "Orange Army" of dedicated supporters who roared every swimmer on the finish. The enthusiasm from the parents in the gallery was like having an extra member of the team.

Basildon Head Coach Doug Campbell said "This National League is very competitive and gives us a real benchmark of how our junior swimmers compare with the very best at other clubs. Our aim is to progress through to the National final and when we have all our swimmers available for all the rounds I think we can challenge for that spot. This is a very important competition within our club calendar and is one of our priorities. It gives the club and the swimmers national recognition that they deserve."

The Team's coaches were delighted with everyone's performance, especially those swimmers who had never competed in this style of event. "Our newbies performed brilliantly and we were delighted that they showed they have a bright future within the club, as individuals and working within the team environment" (Karen Epsly, Gold 3 coach)

The coaches would like to thank Carla Marshall for organising the teams and making frantic last minute phone calls to ensure we had a full team of swimmers, our Lead Team Manager Collette Hunnisett and new team manager Amanda Goodman who made sure all our swimmers were in place for their swims. Also a huge thank you to our dedicated band of officials who were in place throughout the rounds.

Basildon's young stars will now be focusing on consolidating their performances and refocusing for next season where they will be hoping to emulate this year's county championship success.