

BSB MASTERS report November 18th 2015 for BSB Meeting

This covers the period since September 2014..

A total of 41 swimmers (18 female, 23 male) from BSB region took part in the short-course British Gas ASA National MASTERS and Senior Age-Group Championships held in Sheffield over the period 24-26 October 2014. In all 39 top 3 places were achieved. 9 different swimmers took first place in 13 events, the most successful competitor being Katie Henderson (33) with 3 wins and 1 each 2nd and 3rd place. Dave Milburn (52) and Duncan McCreadie (69) had 2 wins each.

Unfortunately only 4 of our National winners were available to compete in the SER Inter-County MASTERS gala held at Beckenham on 16 November 2014. Traditionally BSB have competed strongly in this event, winning the Regional round in 2012 and coming 5th nationally (out of 28 Districts). In 2013 we came 17th (out of 30) with a small team of only 13 swimmers. This year (2014) with a larger complement of 27 swimmers we did rather better in the Regional event and came third behind Hampshire and the winners Sussex. Evidence of the strength of MASTERS swimming in SER is the fact that in the final analysis Sussex came 3rd, Hampshire 6th and BSB 7th out of 29 participating areas.

When approaching this Inter-County event, a few people both within and outside the District had asked if there were any chance of resurrecting our County MASTERS gala which was last held in November 2011 at Maidenhead. There was approval from the Management Board in principle and members of the SER MASTERS Working Group felt that some of their Clubs would support such a venture. However, as members will re-call, circumstances conspired against any such event being introduced into the calendar in 2015 but it remained my intention to re-visit the situation in 2016.

There were 19 competitors from 6 Clubs within BSB, who took part in the SER long-course MASTERS in January 2015 at Crawley. Between them they amassed 20 Gold, 14 Silver and 8 Bronze medals. Star performer was Richard Stannard (41) who had almost a clean sweep with 6 Golds and 1 Silver – he “failed” on 50 Fly!!

The latter part of our season has been overshadowed by the untimely death on 12th June of Katie Henderson, who at the tender age of 33 was one of our best performers. As a member of Reading SC and Loughborough University, Katie was a world-class MASTERS swimmer, setting world records for 100 and 200 breaststroke in 2009 at the age of 27. She had also won titles in freestyle, medley and relay events. She went on to become a successful tri-athlete and achieved 3rd place in last year’s Ironman 70.3 World Championships. It was while she was traveling to an Ironman event at Chacewater, Staffs that her car was involved in a fatal collision, being killed instantly. She is sorely missed by all her friends in the sport.

There were 4 BSB representatives at the recent FINA World MASTERS held in Kazan, Russia in August. Almost inevitably the best performance came from Duncan

McCreadie with 3 top three finishes – and this despite carrying a long-term shoulder injury.

The ASA National MASTERS & Senior Age-Group Championships (SC) took place in Sheffield from October 23 – 25. A total of 43 competitors from BSB (including 3 swimming under the Spencer banner) took part and amassed more than 50 medals. Richard Stannard (41 – MD) was again a major player with 4 Golds . Amanda Heath (58 - swimming for Spencer) never came lower than 3rd in any of her 7 events. Unfortunately Richard was not available for last weekend's Inter-County MASTERS event at Barnet Copthall but despite this, the BSB team of 26 swimmers still managed to take 3rd place (as last year) behind Middlesex and Hampshire. This places us 9th in the National rankings. Duncan McCreadie was a notable absentee as he is still recovering from the operation on his shoulder. I estimate that his absence cost us approx 35-40 points in the individual races alone. This would have elevated us to 6th or 7th position (out of 28).

The second National MASTERS conference is due to be held at Loughborough on Sunday 29th November. Whereas the ASA covered all travel and board expenses for the inaugural Conference last year, there is no such support available this time. Despite this I believe it would have been appropriate for our representative Duncan McCreadie to attend this event, recognizing that there would be a cost on this occasion. Our Board was divided on this issue (costs) but in the final analysis Duncan was unable to attend anyway due to his having a seizure and thereafter being barred from driving for up to 2 months.

As mentioned earlier, consideration was being given to the resurrection of our own Open County MASTERS gala. Following discussion with the Performance Events Committee and Magnet Pool, a provisional booking has been made to hold the event there over 2 sessions on Sunday 11th September 2016. At the weekend I was able to talk with Ian Woollard, organizer of the Barnet Open MASTERS Sprint Meet and that event will now take place on the preceding weekend. Although minimal cross-over of competitors was envisaged, it does seem sensible to avoid a direct clash of dates, if possible.

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