



Water Polo North West Academy Tournament

Fleetwood Jnrs Water Polo team recently competed in the NW Academy tournament. This was held in Liverpool over 4 days during Dec 09 and Jan 10 and was for players born in 1995 and after (14 & under). The North West is a hotbed of Water Polo talent, with teams like Lancaster (British Champions), Manchester and Warrington all taking part this was one of the high standards of youth tournament around. For the current group of Fleetwood Jnrs it was their first competitive tournament.

Overall the team performed brilliantly, there were some harsh lessons learnt when we played the "bigger" (by reputation and physically) teams but the matches against Bridgefield and Chester could have gone either way. The highlight for Fleetwood was the 7-4 victory over Chester, where everything seemed to click and demonstrated the potential the team possesses.

To put some context on the overall performance; the vast majority of the Jnr team are only 12; therefore they have another 2 years of playing at this level. Secondly, most teams had the full squad of 14 players; Fleetwood had only 8 resulting in 1 substitute for all 8 matches. This makes the teams performance all the more impressive.

I would normally choose a "player of the match/tournament" but in this case I feel that every player contributed equally but in different ways. I would like to present the following awards for this tournament:

Bravery or Bravado Award: Captain Jack Hirst

To demonstrate his superior goalkeeping skills, Jack decided against using his hands to save the ball, he opted (questionably so) for the next best thing.....his face! Quite literally taking one for the team.

Hardiness Award: Sam "Mouth" Omerod

After being "encouraged" to swim around more during the previous game, Sam proceeded to rid himself of the contents of his stomach, but he was ready to go for the next game. It's also worth a mention that he was playing against people twice his size.

Marathon Man Award: Iron Mike Lydon

Mike did the football equivalent of "covering every blade of grass", he was everywhere. Clocking up the most mileage in the team.

Defensive Innovation Award: Joe "Smoothy" Booth

Joe's new approach to defence was groundbreaking. His method was simple; mark an opposing female player and when challenging for the ball, Joe would seemingly attempt to land a kiss. In the resulting confusion Joe would steal the ball. Genius!

The Enforcer Award: Lucy "Crusher" Wetherill

For simply accumulating more fouls than the rest of the team combined. But when she wasn't clobbering the opposition she was also busy becoming Fleetwood's top scorer.

Man Of Steel Award: Ollie "Rocket" Roe

Ollie declared himself fit to play despite a hand injury. When he offered to be goalie I enquired if he would be up to it? He responded, "It's only broken fingers". Nails!

Selfless / Team Player Award: Angry Alex Myers

Despite being only 12, "little Al" is the team veteran (I think he has been playing since he was 6). His performance showed great teamwork and intelligence, creating space and chances for others to score. (Yes, Alex Myers and intelligence??)

Fortification Award: James "Freckles" Lydon

You have to be worried about a person that only likes to defend. Freckles put in a fantastic display at the back. He showed discipline, strength and courage against much larger opponents. James took everything they could throw at him (including the odd punch).

A special mention also goes to Emily Winston and James Sloane for attending the tournament as my coaching assistants.

On a personal note I would like to say how proud I was of the whole team (including Emily and Sloaney). They displayed a great team ethic and behaved impeccably throughout the tournament.

The team have now been invited to train at the NW Centre Of Excellence in Lancaster.

Well Done!
Steve B