

East Angels triumph at 2014 U14 Girls Inter-Regional Water Polo Championship

Written by administrator

Friday, 21 November 2014 19:10 -

The trek from East Anglia to the North West is a long way at the best of times. Our juniors often take to the water only to be given a master class by the talented North West teams.

Sometimes a reasonable defeat is our only consolation, but this time was to be different! Head Coach Chris Cawood and assistant coaches Carly Rutter & Jodie Wilkes led the East Angels team of thirteen girls at the Wavertree Aquatics Centre in Liverpool on 8th-9th November. The Under-14 Inter-Regional Championship is a new competition and for many of the squad this was their first time at a national event. Other teams came from Scotland, North East Region, London, East Midlands and two teams from North West.

Team list:

Abigail Sunderland (Hitchin)

Ella Cotton (Bedford Girls School)

Meg Wall-Peters (Colchester)

Paige Flower (Suffolk Coastal Torpedoes)

Anna Leeson (Watford)

Eloise Bailey (Bedford Girls School)

Poppy Mayall (Team Ipswich) CAPTAIN

Charlotte Spinks (Hitchin)

Ruby Doherty (Hitchin)

Eve Poole (Team Ipswich)

Felicity Massie (Hitchin)

Ella Ward (Team Ipswich)

Amelia Spinks (Hitchin)

East Angels were drawn in Group A along with East Midlands Hoods, North West Thunder and London Sharks.

Starting the journey – East vs East Midlands

East Angels opened the scoring in the first minute and soon put two more on the scoreboard, but the tide turned and East Midlands fought back to level 3-3 at the end of the first quarter. East retook the lead and ended the first half 7-4 ahead, but our starting lineup needed a rest and our younger players were fielded. East Midlands capitalised and drew level, then Eve Poole and Poppy Mayall re-entered and restored a 9-7 lead. The last quarter was to and fro and East Midlands clawed back to force a 12-12 draw. The Angels Army fan club were dejected - East were undoubtedly the better team but just hadn't stopped gifting goals to East Midlands, squandering Poole's double hat trick and Mayall's trio.

Winning our Group

Next up was North West Thunder. We had watched them beat London 10-7 and we knew the East Angels had to raise their game, keep control and not let their lead slip when ahead. Starting well with goals from Poole and Ella Cotton, East kept up the pressure and were 7-4 up going into the last quarter. Then defender Mayall picked up her third exclusion and was benched. This changed our game plan and Poole dropped back into pit defence to protect the East goal. North West Thunder crept up to 7-6 but a massive effort from Cotton, Meg Wall-Peters and young player Paige Flower saw two goals from the Angels and a fantastic 9-6 victory

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in the dying seconds of the match. The Angels Army in the balcony reckoned that our third game against London would be simple, but first quarter wobbles saw a 2-2 scoreline before East nerves were steadied by a 5-3 half time lead. A tense third quarter and a strategic timeout call by the East coach added one to our tally, then Wall-Peters and Cotton found the net to give East an 8-4 win. So East Angels finished top of Group A and would be playing North East Steelers in Sunday's semi-final. The squad were full of optimism as they headed for an early night – they had watched North East in action and they looked eminently beatable.

Semi-final – East Angels vs North East Steelers

East coaches knew this result was vital and the Angels must concentrate on the game in hand. We'd come this far and we deserved better than 3rd or 4th place.

East Angels were undeniably the best turned out side in the competition, proudly displaying the East Region logo on their costumes and hoodies, while North East Steelers had matching kit and hats that made them look like fiery wasps. However there was little sting in their tail and East swatted them aside. Defending was key

as the Angels pressed their opponents from the halfway line and seized possession with skill, tenacity and diligence. North East never got settled and East gave them no chance to put any attacking shape into their game. An impressive 11 goals from Poole and 5 from Cotton plus contributions from Wall-Peters and Mayall resulted in a mammoth 19-3 victory and a place in the final. The East Angels team spirit (and perhaps a little bit of swagger) sent a strong message to the two North West teams contesting the second semi-final. No matter who won, the Angels from the East would be waiting for them!

Final – East Angels vs North West Lightning

The East Angels coaches elected to play their strongest side from the start. The teams lined up, the whistle blew and Cotton won the swim off as she had so many times before. East had possession and it was groundhog day as Poole scored the first goal after just twelve seconds. Mayall's exclusion in the next minute left East a player down and North West drew level. The Angels tried everything to gain the ball and conceded three more exclusions, but North West failed to score and a classy goal by Eloise Bailey took East into the lead against the run of play. North West showed their frustration and conceded a penalty which Mayall converted to give East a 3-1 lead as the quarter ended.

Triumph and despair followed in the second period as Mayall broke free to score a great individual goal and then 10 seconds later picked up her second exclusion. One more infringement and East would lose a key defender only half way into the game. Nerves were showing as North West scored twice just before the interval to trim East's lead to 4-3. A chant of "Angels! Angels!" rang out from the crowded balcony and the team's adrenaline surged. Wall-Peters scored to extend East's lead but then picked up two exclusions within the space of a minute to put herself in jeopardy. The audience gasped as East missed a penalty. The Angels were still ahead going into the final quarter but the tension was mounting. East's defence was rock solid from the outset and several North West attacks ran aground. Angels midfielders Ward and Bailey fed the ball to wing attackers Cotton and Wall-Peters, enabling both to find the net, then North West countered with a goal of their own. The final

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minute bell sounded and a last push saw North West score again, but it was too late and the East Angels had beaten them 7-5 on their home turf. The home supporters were speechless while the Angels Army were ecstatic, relieved, overwhelmed, many in tears. East Region's long journey had culminated with our talented young players winning the Championship and due recognition for their achievements. An unbelievable victory, sweeping aside the best from the UK to be the best in the UK.

Well done girls! Well done coaches! Well done families and supporters!