

Masters Award & Round Up speech 2013

Well what a year we have had!

This year has seen the Potters Bar Masters squad expand even more, we now have at least 50 members.

We have had a very busy year competing too at various galas, travelling abroad to Ireland and Holland as well as Plymouth, Luton, Barnet, Newmarket and Bishop's Stortford.

Great results were achieved at all galas with many PB's and lots of laughs too!

So here is a run-down of the year that was.....

We started the year with 8 of us going to the Limerick Masters in Ireland. This was a great experience especially for our first timer Mark Formby, who had a great time, but came away with..... well **** all!!!!!!

We had a great time at the dinner dance after where we collected the Best Overseas Club award and Ian the Top Overseas male award. We then danced the night away – well Darren Hamshire did with his new companion – Helen O'Leary from Dublin. Julian then took over on the dance floor with some interesting moves with the black widow!

Needless to say it all ended in a Club courtesy of Mr Gormley, and a good time was had by all – some a bit too much Mr Formby!

So after that we caught the bug for competing and well...socialising after competing!

In May we swam in the Luton Long Course Masters Spring meet. Where we achieved some great times and picked up a few medals too.

We also experienced a sex change for one event thanks to Mr Amanda Formby – who swam amazingly in the 200m Breast. Next year Mark please take note when your race is!!!

That evening ended with drinks, curry, more drinks, then well the infamous Nolitas, thank heavens that closed down!

In June 6 of us (Myself, Nicola, Louise, Martin, Eugene and Julian) travelled to Plymouth for the GB Long Course Masters. Louise swam really well in the 1500 free then went home to

organise the Peanuts gala – well done Louise. Oh and your escort Mr Swindale (he'll do anything to get a cheap ride!).

For the rest of us we had some good races but the most memorable moments were - Martin getting us dq'd in the mixed freestyle relay – watch those flyers Mr Higgins they are getting a bit too frequent! And of course Eugene narrowly missing his 200m freestyle, making it to the blocks in the nick of time – basically shouting his name to the timekeeper then diving in!

Quote of the meet is Martin to Eugene when he couldn't find his goggles in the panic of getting his clothes off as the rest of his heat were on the blocks “well you'll have to swim without goggles” Eugene – “you're having a laugh, 200 free without goggles!!!!” Luckily he borrowed mine – swam really well with a 2 sec pb, then wouldn't give them back!

Many of us then swam in the annual Herts masters gala in Borehamwood where we had some great swims. April, Nicola & Myself all winning our 50 fly events! I also believe there were first places for Ian and Martin too.

Eugene and Wray then went onto swim in the Pier to Pier Open Water event in Brighton on a very hot summer's day, and both swam really well.

We then all trained hard over the summer – some more than others, (and I now know that sometimes that doesn't pay off and I'm 41 not 21!) in anticipation of the European Masters in Eindhoven.

Daryl & Julian then went to compete in the World Masters Games in Turin and swam amazingly. Daryl won the 50m free and came second in the 50 breast, and Julian came 6th in the 50 free and 10th in the 100 free - great swims.

So after our summer breaks 7 of us travelled to Eindhoven in Holland to compete in the European Masters. What an experience. The pool was amazing and the facilities they laid on for us were great, plus the weather was fantastic too. But remember it was NOT a holiday.

We had some great swims, some that stand out are Darren Hamshere's 50 fly in a time of 32.55 (can't believe I missed half of it – sorry!) Although you got me back by missing my whole race when I swam in the 100m free! Actually you all missed it! Thanks.

Another is Eugene's 200 freestyle where he knocked off 5 seconds and swam brilliantly – unlike myself and Martin who would rather forget the event completely!

Julian, Eugene and Darren also swam really well and achieved PB's in their 100 freestyle races, and Mark Formby swam amazingly at his first international competition – he even swam in the correct heat so not needing to swim as his alter ego – Amanda!

And Nicola and myself swam well too even though we were against – Inge de Bruijn, Dutch Olympic Champion!

We had a great mixed freestyle relay consisting of - Eugene, Myself, Nicola and Darren – and we weren't dq'd!!!! (Martin your place on the team is hanging by a thread!).

Highlights were hitting the flumes at the venue and Center Parcs – where I repeat we did NOT have fun at all! Alarms going off in the villa at ungodly hours of the morning, Martin cutting his head on the bottom of the pool – not whilst racing but whilst doing handstands in the pool at Center parcs! The Walton's – Nicola do you know who they are now.....?

The bunk beds that Darren & Julian shared.

Me shutting you all out of the villa when a dog came racing round the corner looking like he was going to run in – sorry guys – he looked really scary!

Me thinking I had missed my race and running through the call room area onto poolside dropping my hat and drinks bottle, only to find out that I had 10 races to go!!!

Drinking our beers after our final races outside the venue realising that they were 8.6% in strength! Nice.

The lovely hotel that Mr Swindale organised for the last night – was amazing and very luxurious compared to the villa at Center Parcs!

The final nights dancing where we sweated it out on the dance floor for 4 hours!!!! A great work out!

And finally.....watching Nicola and her hubbie swim in the 3k Open Water event after our night on the town (they were sensible and didn't join us in the dancing!) – well done to them.

Just 2 weeks later we were competing at the Barnet Masters sprint meet, where we had some good swims too, although many of us said we preferred long course! Well done to Ian for swimming in most of the events again – you are amazing!

Highlight of that meet however, has to be Eugene swimming in the 25m free splash & dash. He so wanted to beat Darren Hamshere, and after seeing him swim a disappointing 14.02 we all looked at him preparing and could see on his face that he thought - yes I am going to beat him, as his previous time was 11.8 secs. Unfortunately though that was not to be the case this time - and he came in around the 15 second mark. However, the funniest moment was him finishing the race in lane 8 right next to where we were all sitting, and looking at his time on the board, then seeing us all laughing at him!!! Sorry – but it was so funny. (But you probably had to be there?!!!)

Then to Dublin.....

What a great crack!!!

After the Guinness tour which was obviously the highlight of the weekend....whoops no the swimming was of course!

The pool was really great to swim in – had a good feel!

More great swims especially from April who swam extremely well considering she'd got up at 3am that morning!

Martin – did it again and got the men's freestyle relay dq'd this time – his quote 'b*ll*cks it was not a flyer'. Unfortunately the judge didn't agree!

Lots of medals were won too. My highlight of the gala was touching out Mr Gormley in the 200m free – thanks to Martin and his helpful tactics by pacing him, I could see where he was and put an extra spurt on at the finish!!!

Martin's goggles were a feature too – where they fell off in every backstroke race he swam in! He then decided to take them off for the relay but couldn't see the wall to turn!!!

We then had a great evening in Temple Bar Dublin where the Guinness was flowing and we all had a laugh – even me although I lost my phone for part of the evening!

Just the weekend after Nicola, Ian & James Allchorne travelled to Sheffield for the GB Short Course masters meet. All swam really well Ian was 5th in the 50m breast, 10th in the 50 fly and 5th in the 100 breast. Nicola 7th in the 200IM, and James was 9th in the 100 fly and 10th in the 100 free.

A few of us then went to Newmarket for the Intercounties competition where Hertfordshire came 2nd to Essex just missing out on first place by 2 points! And Darren Hamshere got to swim in a relay with an Olympic Swimmer!!! Oh and got to swim in the 50 back!

And finally the last gala of the year the Herts Senior League where we competed as a team. As usual many of us turned up with minutes to spare and didn't warm up – but that seems to be the norm now and a good tactic!

Another evening of good swimming especially by those swimmers who are not as experienced including Yvonne, Sue Branch and Albane who had never swum in a gala before and had only just been shown how to do a backstroke turn by myself and Ian – well done. We came a very creditable 5th place so a good result all round, and had the usual laughs and curry after.

So what a great year we have had. I'd like to say thank you to all of you for being such a lovely bunch of people, it is so nice to swim with you and to have fun too. When you are our age it matters a lot. We are always there for each other to give advice and cheer each other up. I do of course need to thank John for coaching us this year and putting up with our (well my) constant chatter during training – sorry John!

So finally to the Masters award of the year.....

Many nominations were sent to me and I could give awards for so many things this year for example....

Best performance – Daryl for his World Masters Games win, Darren for his 65 in 100 free, 32 in 50 fly, Julian for his 100 free swim, Eugene for breaking the 1.10 in the 100 free and his 200 free swim in Eindhoven.

Best Newcomer – James Aiken for his great swims this year – and dancing at the presentation night, Caroline for her help with the Land Training and her swims too.

Crock of the year – there have been so many!! Steve LeStrange, Louise, Julian and Eugene – who is the current crock!

John's idea now –

Poor excuse of the year – Nicola for her unpolished trophy dilemma!

Comeback of the Year – Cate Jackson & James Allchorne – what great swimmers we have now.

Psycho swimmer – April for the amount of fly she swims!!!

Mark Formby for a great swim as a female!

However, the main Masters of the year award goes to somebody who has progressed from the Novice Masters just a couple of years ago and has improved their times at an amazing rate this year, also pb'ing in most events, always pushing, and laughing. Trains hard, plays hard sometimes too!! And is a real asset to our Masters squad, and I am really glad that I know and swim with this person.

This year I am so pleased to present the award to..... the one and only... aka 'Lightning' - Darren Hamshere.