

## Hampshire Water Polo Report 2023-4

The year has been a good one for water polo in the county. We completed the first season of the Hampshire Junior Water Polo League, incorporating 8 clubs from across the county (and a couple slightly beyond, including Guernsey). The competition was very close throughout the year between Winchester, Bournemouth and Winchester, but Winchester finally prevailed by a single point.

In the senior League, Southampton entered two even teams as usual, and 'Southampton Lager' came out on top, with 'Southampton Bitter' second and Portsmouth third. This season, we welcomed the Channel Islands into the League and it looks like they will win the title in their first season.

In the British Water Polo League, Southampton men were unfortunate to miss out on the second phase where they could have challenged for promotion to Division 1, by a single goal across 7 matches, and then ended up too low down the division and will have to play in Div 3 next year. The Sirens (Southampton's women's team) had a very successful year in the Conference (replacement for former Division 3), coming second and only losing a single match.

Many of the clubs across the county have also been competing in other competitions, with various trips to Jersey, Cornwall and other destinations for tournaments. Basingstoke have a thriving junior section and are playing in the London League, as are the Southampton Women.

There were several individual successes, with many players from the county involved in the National Talent Centre, and also in medal-winning teams in the national Age Group Championships (although sadly the teams they represent are outside the county, since we have not put any Hampshire teams into this competition.) Elizabeth Ross (Andover) has been playing regularly in the GB U18 women's team and will be hoping to go to the Senior European Championships in a couple of years, where we are pre-qualified thanks to GB's outstanding results in the Euros and Worlds in January and February.

Winchester Water Polo Club won the South East Region Water Polo Club of the Year for 2023, and a silver medal in the Swim England National Water Polo Club of the Year.

In terms of officials, we have a good number of new coaches participating in courses and earning qualification, but are still very short of qualified referees.

Toby King – April 2024.