

Speedo Invitational – Race Report November 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>.

Aqua Squads took to the Hamdan sports complex pool to prove they can compete with some of the best in the region. There were many numerous outstanding achievements to mention so I will run through the sessions as they happened.

There were a few nervous faces as we turned up early Friday morning for session 1 warm up. Kacper and Hubert Zalewski were introduced into the frantic scenario of a jam packed warm up as Kacper took a smack to the face from a rash tumble turn from another swimmer.

When everyone was prepped and ready to go coaches Seth, Neil and Justin sat quietly confident as the 200m Freestyle Heats began. We could not have predicted the amount of personal bests we witnessed that morning as swimmers kicked off a session to remember with PB's for everyone in the **50m's backstroke** and **100m's Breastroke**. This great start was followed by a spectacular **100m Individual Medley** that saw Jack Evans, Julia Hajagos and Megan Parks storm into the finals. Next event the splash and dash sprint in **50m's Freestyle**, both Jack Evans and Minna Abrahams advance into the finals with big PB's notably Jack breaking into the 27 second mark leaving his father dazed as he wondered what he would achieve in the final.

It takes a lot of guts to stand up on the blocks in front of 100's of people and race. For this young lad he was not fazed and surpassed all expectations. Kacper Zalewski swam out of his skin to not only swim a personal best of 35.34 in his 50m's freestyle but also on his competitive debut make the final 8. All swimmers made a tremendous effort in session 1 and deserved mentions go to Lucy Parks, Ivan Marchionni, Hubert Zalewski, Akos Hajagos and Amelia Evans for showing great progress in the past 3 months of training.

We returned in the afternoon for 6 finals where all swimmers placed in the top 6 and more personal bests recorded in all swims. and to finish on a high Jack posted a new 50m Freestyle record of 27.69 to boot. So far we could have not asked for a better start as we were arguably the most successful club on day 1.

## Day 2.

Swimmers and Coach Neil returned on Day 2 with high hopes and expectation for more success in the pool. The morning began with the **50m's Breastroke** as Minna Abrahams advanced to the final soon followed by Hubert Zalewski showing he too had the potential to race and make the finals on the debut into competitive swimming. Amelia Evans had a fantastic race, since joining AQUA in September she has come so far and we expect great things to come from her in the future.

Next up the **50m's Butterfly** and the surprise twist of the weekend as all entrants beat their personal bests. Notable mentions going to Lucy Parks and Minna Abrahams for smash their previous best times by over 4 seconds. Similarly in the boys Akos Hajagos, Kacper Zalewski and Jack Evans beat their previous PB's comfortably, the wait for the result of the heats was palpable as we knew Minna had advanced to final and she was shortly follow by Jack. Next the **100m's Freestyle**, unfortunately no finalists but a commendable effort by all swimmers who raced as by this point they had given everything.

One more session to go with the potential podium place for 2 swimmers the pressure was on Jack and Minna to pull it out the bag. First up was Minna Abrahams in the **50m Breastroke** who raced a brilliant final to unfortunately be pipped to the finish by a fingertip touch to come 4<sup>th</sup>. Slightly upset and down on confidence Minna jumped into the diving pit to cool down and re-focus for her next raced determined to get her hands on some silverware. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Polish machine was ready to rock and roll; Hubert took his place on the blocks for his **50m Breastroke** and swam admirably to place 7<sup>th</sup> in his race and another great achievement to compliment his brother Kacper on their competitive debuts. Minna was back and ready for some glory in the **50m Butterfly**, yet again she didn't disappoint and she came into the last 5m's clawing herself back into contention for a medal but in a nail biting finish came 4<sup>th</sup>. She surpassed all expectation and to swim bottom of her age group and make finals in 3 out of 4 races is a phenomenal achievement and will definitely reach the podium next time around. Jack Evans was next his **50m Butterfly** in the final race of the weekend and outside chance to claim a medal. This was one of the highlights of the meet as Jack dived in and surfaced in 2<sup>nd</sup> place before the 15 metre mark. He touched after the first 25m in 2<sup>nd</sup> place with 4 other swimmers neck and neck. A long weekend of tough took its toll and the field started to pull away but Jack dug deep and began to reel them in. With 5m's to go and 1 stroke behind he was 6<sup>th</sup> then 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> to finish behind 3<sup>rd</sup> place by a mere 10<sup>th</sup>'s of a second. He finished in style with yet another PB and breaking the big bench mark of going under 30 seconds in a brilliant time of 29.43s.

Another great finish to session 4 as all swimmers put their stamp on the gala showing we had strength across all ages.