

Hastings Water Polo Team sees double success in Twin Town of Dordrecht in Holland.

Each year for the last 72 seasons Hastings Swimming Club has visited the Twin Town of Dordrecht to compete against them in swimming and water polo. This year's visit was a special one as it coincided with the Dordrecht City Swim, which is organised each year to support Cancer Charities, and Hastings was invited to enter a four-man team into the 1km canal swim.

The Hastings Water Polo squad of eight players set off early on the Friday in order to arrive in Dordrecht for the surprise 50th birthday party of Arend Haksteen the Captain of the Dordrecht Water Pool team. After brief and boisterous celebrations at the Merwede Clubhouse a warm-up game of polo was organised in the nearby Lido. The term warm-up was slightly misleading as the Lido is open air and therefore the game was played at a rapid pace so that no one froze to death!

Saturday was a big day. Temperatures soared and thousands of people gathered to witness literally dozens of open water races in the extensive canal system of this famous old Dutch City. The Hastings fastest four swimmers, James and Tom Blything, Ben Horner and Ben Peppiat, were chosen to represent Hastings and they dutifully assembled in the Speedos at the start point ready to take on all comers in the 1km race; and what a race it was! Ben Horner took the lead early on with James in constant chase mode. Tom and Ben Peppiat gamely keeping up. The result of all their efforts was second place for Ben Horner in a speedy 15mins 10 secs, less than 1 min behind the overall leader, James Blything 3rd in 16.mins 14 secs. Tom Blything was 7th and brave Ben Peppiat came in without dying. The photo shows the gallant quartet wearing their competitor's regalia including a medal and robe with towel.

This gallant effort gave rise to more celebrations on this gloriously sunny day.



The next morning heralded the call to the impressive Merwede Stadium where the Hastings Seagull team had to face two games against formidable teams from the Merwede Club.

The first game immediately showed the strength of the opposition who scored two quick goals to put Hastings on early alert. A beautifully taken goal by Alexis Philippidis showed the Dutch that the Hastings lads were not be pushed about but constant pressure on the Seagull's goal led to a healthy mid game lead for the experienced Merwede team. Despite gallant goal keeping by James Blything and indefatigable defence by his younger brother James supported by Ben Peppiat and Tim Pearce the game was never going in favour of the visitors from Hasting. The second half of this game brought Hastings goals from Duncan Izzard, the Team Captain, Ben Horner and Richy Moon but the fate of Hastings was sealed with a 12-7 goal defeat. The second game was a different matter altogether. Hastings got off to a flying start with goals from James Blything, Alexis Philippidis and Richy Moon. Tom Blything stopped a penalty and Moon missed his opportunity. Duncan Izzard, as always, exhorted his team to greater efforts in the half-time team talk, Ben Horner used his considerable swimming skills to outrun the Dutch defence, Moon scored two more goals as did James Blything and all the rest of the team rallied well to give a fine 9-6 goal win to the Seagulls.

All that remained after this exhausting and rewarding weekend was to thank all our kind hosts, particularly Arend Haksteen and Erik van Heijningen (who was the main Organiser of the prestigious City Swim) and say our fond farewells to the very hospitable Dordrecht friends and hosts saying that we all look forward to this long running association continuing for another 72 years.

The Dordrecht Team will be arriving in Hastings to play in the Observer Trophy Water Polo Competition at the Summerfields Sports Centre on the weekend of the 12th of October where they will meet Hastings again and teams from Brighton, Guernsey and Crawley.

The full Hastings squad on this trip was Duncan Izzard, Richy Moon, Alexis Philipidis, Ben Horner, Ben Peppiat, James and Tom Blything and Tim Pearce.

TG Pearce

Hastings Seagull Water Polo TEAM

