

## **Three Counties Invitation Gala, Stafford Leisure Centre Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

Staffordshire gave a strong team performance to retain the Joe Belfield Trophy at the annual Three Counties Gala. Staffordshire, pushed all the way by Worcester County, were able to hold off a late challenge to claim the trophy by 2 points from Worcester County, with Gloucestershire in 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The Staffordshire team took the overall lead as early as the second event and never relinquished this position. Four wins from the first 6 races, thanks to Holly Shepherd (10/11 100m IM), Joshua Steele (10/11 100m IM), Jodie Hawksworth (14/16 100m Breaststroke) and the Boys Cannon meant Staffordshire were able to build up a ten point lead over their closest challengers, Worcester.

Throughout the gala whenever Worcester were able to narrow the gap, Staffordshire responded almost immediately to restore the cushion. By the half way point, despite a further wins eight for Staffordshire (Edward Martin (10/11 50m Butterfly), Reiss Harrison (12/13 100m Freestyle), Alice Holmes (14/16 200m IM), Connor Cartlidge (10/11 50m Backstroke), Danielle Mullinder (12/13 100m Breaststroke), James Booker (12/13 100m Breaststroke) and two relays), the lead had been cut to 6 points.

Staffordshire started the second half of the gala strongly, with wins from Gabe Butler (1/11 50m Freestyle), Joseph Hulme (12/13 200m IM) and Kelly–Anne Smith (14/16 100m Backstroke) to help extend their lead to 12 points. By event 35, the lead over Worcester was 11 points, following wins for Rebecca Twardochleb (10/11 50m Breaststroke), Bryony Woolley (12/13 100m Butterfly) and Matthew Stevenson (12/13 100m Butterfly).

However over the remaining nine events of the competition, this lead was gradually reduced, until with one event to go, the Girls 6 x 50m Cannon, it was only 2 points. A solid performance by both relay teams in the last event meant Staffordshire matched Worcester's points to claim the trophy by only two points.

A massive well done to all the swimmers involved for their efforts and performances to retain the trophy; and Thank You to the Captains, Dani Amson, Ellie Jones, Ben Wood and Alex Dawson.

### **Final Points Positions**

<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>STAFFORDSHIRE</b>	<b>322 points</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Worcester County	320 points
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Gloucestershire	281 points