

Swimmer breaks county record

RETFORD has a new record-breaking county champion.

Sixteen-year-old Rachel Lefley of Retford Swimming Club beat all comers in the 100 metres backstroke in the Nottinghamshire ASA County Championships on Saturday.

Her time of 1.02.09 beat a record which had stood for 13 years.

And Rachel underlined her potential by finishing second in the final of the 100 metres butterfly in a time of 1.05.66.

The opening series of this year's championships was notable for a number of storming performances by Retford's young swimmers. Lauren Fisher, 15, also made the final of the backstroke event in which there were excellent performances too from Jessica Tomlinson, Alice Cary, Gemma O'Driscoll and Hannah O'Donoghue.

Jessica is clearly destined for future stardom. Despite her tender years and slender frame, the 13-year-old came third overall in the 400 metres individual medley and easily won her age group in a time of 5.18.20.

The Retford girls had a brilliant day. Jessica Johnson made the final of the 50 metre breaststroke and there were exceptional performances in the same event from Lydia Pace, Antonia Sharpe and Hannah O'Donoghue.

And there were some big personal bests from the boys too. Adam Morton made the final of the 200 metre breaststroke, finishing third.

In the 100 metres butterfly, 13-year-old James Taylor continued his progress by knocking more than six seconds off his previous best time and backed that up with an 11 second improvement in the 200 metres individual medley in which he posted a time good enough to qualify for the summer's midlands championships.

Ryan Roberts, also 13, was another to achieve midland qualification times with strong swims in the 200 IM and the 200 breaststroke, while Joseph Sharpe and Henry Bland figured strongly in the 50 metres backstroke.

The County Championships continue throughout February and March and club chairman Andy Johnson says he is confident Retford can achieve much more in the coming weeks.

"This was a wonderful start for the club," he said.

"Rachel can be extremely proud of her achievement. Breaking a county record, especially one that has stood for a long time, confirms her arrival as one of the best swimmers Nottinghamshire has produced for a while. But all the competitors on Saturday did Retford proud."

RAVAGED by injuries and illness, Retford Swimming Club's youngsters dug deep to earn a creditable second place in the Minor Gala League competition at Worksop on February 4.

And given a little more luck and competitive experience they would surely have scored a famous victory against the odds.

Disqualifications and the failure to enter swimmers in two events cost Retford a minimum of 14 points which would have given them a clear winning margin in the junior event.

The team produced a strong second half performance, anchored by dominant swims by the older competitors, to get within two points of the eventual winners, Sutton-in-Ashfield.

A number of swimmers turned in winning performances and personal best times, including Henry Bland, Antonia Sharpe, Ryan Roberts, Niamh Askin, Joe Sharpe, Annabel Grant, James Taylor and Christian Tomlinson. And Hannah O'Donoghue produced the finest performance of all, swimming up one age group to take the 12 and under 200 metres freestyle in a personal best 2.40.82.

Result:

Sutton 220

Retford 218

Southwell 151

Bingham 151

Hucknall 133