



Leinster Winter Championships

The Leinster Winter Championships took place over the weekend of 4th to the 6th of December, and what a weekend it turned out for Aer Lingus Swimming Club, from the beginning of the gala to the end on Sunday evening our club were the dominant force.

Andrew Meegan and Edward O'Neill set the tone for the weekend, by achieving a 1 – 2 in the senior boys 1500 free style. This was followed, in the next event by Wendy O'Neill and Tara English repeating the result in the girls 800 free style. The last events of the evening saw, our girls relay teams establishing the highest of standards by winning both junior and senior 4 x 200 freestyle events, in fact the juniors ran the senior girls quite close with only 4 seconds between the two teams in the end.

Saturday had something of familiar feel about it when Niamh McDonnell and Hayley Burke finished first and second in the 100 back stroke. Niamh went on to take a silver in the 100 butterfly later in the session.

In the 400 free style the result between Wendy and Tara was reversed with Tara pipping Wendy for the silver medal in the junior section with Niamh (again), taking gold in the senior event. In the boys 400 free, victory went to Gavin Truman.

Our strength in depth was proved again when both the junior and senior boys and girls won their respective 4 x 100 free style relays, what a way to finish off a session.

However, the team kept the best for Sunday, at the end of the first session the girls senior team, of Hayley, Catriona English, Niamh and Emma Fitzpatrick made up for the disappointment of disqualification in the National Short Course Championship by breaking the Irish National Record in the 4 x 50 IM relay. A remarkable achievement and Aer Lingus Swimming Club now hold 3 National Records.

Sunday evening and the medal fest continued with Andrew winning the 200 Butterfly in impressive style, 6 second ahead of his closest competitor. Sarah Taaffe came second in the girls event, only being beaten into second by a girl 4 years her senior. Hayley Burke claimed the 50 backstroke title after an exciting 'skins' event and Edward O'Neill took the 100 Breast title with Catriona doing likewise in the girls event.

One of the highlights of this session was the 200 back stroke final when 5 of the 6 competitors were from Aer Lingus, another notable achievement. Despite the high representation the gold medal proved elusive.

The weekend ended with more success, and a repeat performance from the relay teams, all four, 4 x 100 IM events, were won by Aer Lingus, with the senior girls going close to another national record.

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It goes without saying that this gala was a major success for the club and apart from the medals, records and titles that were won, the number of PB's achieved was astounding.

This gala brings to a close the short course season for many of our senior swimmers, and all can look back on an outstanding start to the year.

To close this article, I must once again thank all those parents who took their turn time keeping and being turn judges, as a result of the number of swimmers we have competing at these events we are called on to provide a high number of officials, therefore in the interest of fairness it is imperative that every family take their turn.

For further details on results, please see the gala section of the website and the Leinster Swimming website.

<http://www.swimleinster.com/results.htm>