



1st Heathrow Open

International Club Championships

16th & 17th September 2006

The 2006 Heathrow Open, Britain's first ever International Club Championships, was a resounding success at Bracknell Leisure Centre at the weekend. Clapping and cheering along with the dance beat, the fantastic audience was treated to nearly 200 dynamic routines, uniquely ranging from under 10's at recreational level to seniors at international level.

For many of the younger recreational competitors it was the first time they'd ever competed, but their enthusiasm and excitement was palpable as they kicked off the whole event on Saturday morning. Katie Holder of Suki was the first to win a gold medal, she won the RAC U10's, then made it a double gold with her team mate Victoria Barrell in the pairs. In the Under 12's Rebecca Coan, Bulmershe took gold, with Heathrow's own Hiba Omer just 0.4 behind in second place and in Group 1, (for 12-14 year olds), Rebecca Smith from Waterside took the title.

At NAC (National Aerobic Code) level, Rebekah Galpin from Bulmershe took the U10 gold. Team mate Georgia Mackie won the biggest category of the day, the Under 12's. Heathrow was delighted with the performances from their youngsters in this category: Tyler Ansel tied in 3rd place with a score of 14.550, just 0.35 behind Georgia, but was pushed back into 4th place on the count back rules which take the highest execution score, and Siana Williams performed well coming 12th out of 20.

Emily Keane of Heathrow was absolutely delighted with her performance rewarding her with her first gold medal and the first for her club with 14.400. Zanna Woods, Pinewood and Jessica Walters Bulmershe were 2nd and 3rd respectively. Heathrow's newcomer Ella de Cruz is gaining in confidence - if it hadn't been for an unfortunate deduction for footwear she'd have been 10th but was 14th out of 17. Chloe Foot from Waterside won the 15 to 17s individual category, with Abigale Jones, Martine's Action Pack and Maria Williams, Waterside, in 2nd and 3rd. Laila Ladak, Gillingham was the senior winner with Emma Berry, Weston, hot on her heels and Michelle Fox, Goshawks, in 3rd.

However the most notable success story for the first day of competition was that of the boys - in two NAC age groups there were enough boys to fill the medal podiums! This is a huge achievement for the sport in Britain which so lacks male competitors compared to other nations. Congratulations to Matthew Saunders, Weston, for winning gold in outstanding style being three points ahead of his rivals in the U10s and Jaime Carter of Pinewood for taking gold in the 15-17s. A mention too for Charles Porter and James Key from Sleaford and Damien Davenport, Gillingham and Ryan Stalham, also Sleaford, the other medal winners in these categories respectively. Michael Porter from Sleaford took gold in the 12-14 male individual category. During the day we also saw two all male trios from Bulmershe.

Day 2 saw the international competitors step to the floor in the FIG event. Teams from Spain, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic and Sweden had arrived in Bracknell over the previous few days ready for the competition. Heathrow were however disappointed to hear on Friday that the expected Indian delegation, which would have been an asset to the senior rounds, had not received their travel visas from the British Embassy and so would not be able to attend.

The top four places in the individual women's U10's were each separated by just 0.1, but it was Hannah Owen of Bulmershe who took first place. Mention must be made of the two little German girls, Isabell Von Thaler and Sina Voight, from ATV Eisenberg, who were competing abroad for the first time - they were disappointed with their individual performances, but took silver in the pairs behind Kayleigh Silva and Crystal Jones from Martine's Action Pack. Connor Glancy of Bulmershe won the men's.

In what was the biggest category of the entire weekend with 30 competitors, Stacy Chance from Bulmershe was a clear winner in the 12-14s scoring 16.550, over a whole mark ahead of her nearest rival. The fight for the next four places was a tight one as has come to be expected in this age group. On this occasion it was Fay Manning and Ellie Spooner, from Pinewood who took the remaining medals. Heathrow's Sophie Lewis, tied fourth with Bethany Martin of Waterside with 15.300 – she lost out on execution, but it was an excellent result with a new routine. Vicki Litherland, improving all the time, was Klas' best placed competitor in 7th. Araceli Varo of Club Gimnastico Aragon, Spain, was the highest scoring competitor from overseas in this category - in 9th place she was actually only 0.2 off a medal, which shows just how close this round was. Julia Ruecker from ATV Eisenberg, Germany was 10th, still scoring over 15. Heathrow's Natalie Green, competing with a new routine, made some errors but has time to work on these for the British in three weeks time.

New trio champions in this age group are Nicole Androwitsch, Nicole Brandstoetter and Jasmin Motycka from Club Sportunion Stockerau of Austria, who performed a lovely routine to go well over a whole mark ahead of the Bulmershe trio. ATV Eisenberg (Lisa John, Jessica Findeisen and Sophie Purucker) took bronze. Club Sportunion Stockerau took home two more sets of gold medals in the Group 1 group and out of age trio categories. The pairs title went to Pinewood who were without Sebastian de Verteuil for their trio; Julia Kunert and Ronja Suxdorf from Club SVg Ponitz, Germany, just missed out in 4th place, behind Waterside and Weston.

Group 2, the 15-17s, was no less exciting, albeit with half the number of competitors. Just 0.05 separated the top two, but it was Marta Bonet from Club Gimnastico Aragon, Spain who snatched the title with 16.200 from Chrystal Hayselden, of Bulmershe, whose team mate Katie Fitz-Costa took bronze. Heathrow's Kirtsy Banfield missed a medal by just 0.05 with team mate Sian Hill, who ably demonstrated that she has now got to grips with the extra elements and time required after moving up from Group 1 at the start of this year, right behind her in fifth. Siana Shipley and Jacqui Bamforth of Heathrow came 7th and 9th respectively. Rosie Webster had a three way tied score in 10th with Sophie Springgay, Bulmershe and AnnTherese Johansson of Sweden, but dropped to 12th on count back.

Katie Cannon, Heathrow, performed her new routine for the first time in front of the judges - being an experienced senior athlete she knows it wasn't up to her usual standard but after months of work was pleased to finally include the difficult flairs-to-wenson element, which is normally only seen in men's routines. Nonetheless it was still the highest score of the weekend giving Katie the senior women's title. Caryl Griffiths, Aero-Gym, was second and Alexandra Theoharis of Waterside third. Nadine Burandt of ATV Eisenberg suffered two deductions which together cost her a medal place.

Although disappointed that he hadn't got the anticipated competition from the Indian senior male, Igor Homolka, from the Czech Republic, produced a solid performance, displayed the highest difficulty of the weekend and gave much needed inspiration to all the young British males watching. Thank you Igor!

It was a long weekend for all those involved, but a very enjoyable one. From the organisers point of view the event seemed to run very smoothly. Thanks must go to all the judges who were invaluable and in particular to Andrea Zimmermann of ATV Eisenberg who speaks little English but judged on both days missing her team's trip to Windsor to help. Thanks also to all the volunteers from fellow British clubs which helped the hard-working and dedicated Heathrow team. As a mark of its success the overseas teams have already expressed interest in returning for the 2nd Heathrow Open International Club Championships next year!