

East Region U16 Girls triumph at Walsall Inter-Regional Championship 2015

The Inter-Regional Championship was held on 4th-5th July with East Region playing in Division 2 at Walsall. The East Region U16 squad were resplendent in their new 'East Angels' costumes, shirts and shorts, looking like a team with something to prove even before entering the water.

East were facing teams from London, Midlands, Wales, and South East with four full-length matches over the weekend. The squad consisted of the following players with the starting seven comprising Scarce, Colliver, Coyle, Cotton, Wall-Peters, Mayall, Poole.

Hat	Name	Club
1	Erin Scarce	S.C.Torpedoes
2	Ciara Nicholson	Chelmsford
3	Eda Colliver	Modernians
4	Rebecca Coyle	Basildon
5	Ella Cotton	Modernians
6	Meg Wall-Peters	Ipswich
7	Poppy Mayall	Ipswich
8	Eve Poole	Ipswich
9	Hannah Osborne	Ipswich
10	Eloise Bailey	Modernians
11	Paige Flower	S.C.Torpedoes
12	Ella Ward	Ipswich
13	Amelia Spinks	Hitchin
<i>SUB</i>	<i>Ruby Doherty</i>	<i>Hitchin</i>

Game 1: East vs South East

The opening game was key to set the mood in the camp and settle nerves across the team. South East looked like a well organised side in the first quarter, thwarting our chances a number of times in front of goal, but Meg Wall-Peters scored a brace to open our account. The sides were evenly matched in the second quarter until a remarkable breakthrough saw us ahead 7-2 at half time thanks to Eve Poole and Ella Cotton. Poole had to retire with a shoulder injury but East continued to dominate with goals from captain Poppy Mayall, Eloise Bailey and Ella Cotton. The final period saw debutante Ciara Nicholson score her first goal for the Angels on her first touch of the ball!

Coyle took advantage of a loose pit defence to put 4 more on the scoreboard, followed by a hat-trick from another debutante Eda Colliver who took the score to 18-5 just as the final whistle went. East Angels had shown superior swim speed & fitness and the key element of their game was rock solid defence and quick counters, a formula seen at the U14's in Liverpool earlier in 2015. Eight scorers across the East team showed the threat could come from anywhere in the pool, and our goalie was looking like she was a force to be reckoned with.....we had made our mark.

Game 2: London vs East

The London team were drawn mostly from the successful Otters club, familiar faces to Mayall who trains with them. The game started and it was clear that the main London threats were Gillie and Toth. East Angels were back to full strength with Poole in the water and mounted a strong one-on-one defence to contain their threat and slow the London attack. Cotton and Wall-Peters put us ahead and the quarter ended with East leading 2-4. Both sides scored in the next two periods but

East maintained the gap to lead 6-8 going into the last quarter. A tense start saw no goals for nearly 3 minutes but a missed penalty and a yellow card for the London coach kept the entertainment up for the spectators. The tide began to turn in London's favour and they drew level on 9-9. The Angels players and coaches were feeling the pressure but an inspired long-range strike from Mayall lifted the spirits of all Angels fans and players. Colliver made it certain with just 13 seconds on the clock and a very relieved East team finished with a hard fought 9-11 victory.

8 of London's goals had come from one person, scoring machine Gillie, but by contrast seven East players had contributed to our tally and demonstrated the strength of our squad. East Angels could now relax overnight and enjoy their victories before the next day's challenges.

Game 3: East vs Midlands

Day 2 of the event started with the shock news that Wall-Peters was ill and unable to start. This was a big loss after her major contribution to Saturday's victories, but the coaches came up with a new game plan and added defender Ella Ward to the starting lineup with Colliver moving up front and Rebecca Coyle taking the left midfield position.

Midlands had looked a handful in their previous games with an attack force similar to Angels and fire-power throughout. Poole got East off to a quick start but Midlands grabbed two back and the game was level pegging till two great goals from Cotton put East 4-3 ahead at half time. The 3rd quarter proved to be a turning point, with East's impenetrable defence and fast counter attacks putting us 9-5 ahead going into the final period thanks to Mayall and Poole. Two more apiece for each team saw East take a well deserved 11-7 win.

It had been a proper game of digging deep and battling hard by all players in the pool with some tremendous defensive displays, notably Coyle in pit defence repeatedly pushing Midlands attacker Shay out from 2 metres to about 8 metres whilst on the ball. Great work from Coyle and everyone else in front of our own goal. The scoresheet testified to the physicality and passion with no fewer than 17 exclusion fouls between the teams.

Game 4: East vs Wales

The championship rules made this a must-win game for East to be sure of denying rivals London the top spot. On Saturday Wales had looked a tough opposition in attack though with a leaky defence which East hoped to breach, but first we had to contain their rampant centre forward Warren. The first quarter saw 7 goals and 5 exclusions across the two teams, finishing 4-3 to East, and it was clear this game was going to be physical with East struggling to free up our counter attackers. Wales's strength battered us in the second quarter and they were soon leading 5-7 before Coyle and Cotton levelled the score 7-7 at the interval.

Things needed to change – this close contact game was wearing us down as Wales made the most of their strength and size with some dubious tactics off the ball. Our coaches called for the Angels to make the most of our superior speed and fitness and the team rose to the challenge, breaking free into our sweet spot and scoring 8 goals between Mayall, Poole, Cotton and Wall-Peters, now thankfully recovered and making a brave contribution.

With Wales on the back foot the East Angels seemed to grow in stature, confidence and determination despite the bruising tackles and underwater fouls from their frustrated opponents. A final flurry of 6 goals from East, again with only a single goal in reply, finished the game off with a stunning 21-9 score and a tribute to the team's the resolve and persistence.

East Angels – Division 2 Champions!

East Angels were now division 2 Champions, winning promotion for next year. They returned to the stands to a standing ovation from the parents and supporters whose chant of 'Angels, Angels' had absolutely lifted spirits throughout the tournament.

It's difficult to mention everyone's involvement when the goals attract most of the commentary, but every player put in a sterling performance this weekend. Erin Scarce played out of her skin in goal and saved many shots through her determination and rapidly improving goalkeeping skills. Ella Ward was one of the best defenders on the team with fantastic power and work rate. Amelia Spinks did a great job defending and worked the wings to adding breadth to the attacking force. Eloise Bailey nailed 3 goals on counter attack and is one to watch next year. Hannah Osborne's presence grew as the games went on, marking well and getting into space going forward. Paige Flower swam strongly, winning the ball and threatening goal. Ciara Nicholson was our smallest player with the biggest heart, a power house to be reckoned with in attack & defence.

East Angels U16 team will be ready for Division 1 next year. Ten of the squad are under 15 and will be eligible to play again, so we have high hopes!

Brian Poole (Head Coach)

13th July 2015

Statistics:

Top scorer: Eve Poole

Scorers: Eve Poole(18), Ella Cotton (11), Poppy Mayall (8), Rebecca Coyle (7), Meg Wall-Peters (7), Eda Colliver (6), Eloise Bailey (3), Ciara Nicholson (1)

Exclusions Queen: Ella Cotton

Exclusions: Ella Cotton (7), Poppy Mayall (6), Eve Poole (5), Rebecca Coyle (4), Eda Colliver (1), Meg Wall-Peters (1)

Goals for: 61

Goals against: 30

Exclusions conceded: 24

Exclusions gained: 30

Most Valuable Player (Tournament vote): Poppy Mayall

Most Valuable Player (Parents vote): Erin Scarce

Most Valuable Player (Team vote): Meg Wall-Peters

Team Spirit award: Meg Wall-Peters