



## Lancaster's Brilliant Water Polo Men – British Champions Again!

Lancaster's fantastic run of success at the summit of national water polo continued yet again last weekend when they retained their British Champions Title. On Saturday they overcame some spirited resistance from Yorkshire side Rotherham in the semi-final with a 13-8 and followed this up on Sunday with a solid performance against historical rivals Bristol which ended in a 13-7 win.

Yet again Lancaster City Swimming & Water Polo Club has produced the top men's water polo team in the country. Great credit must go not only to the players but also to the coach Alberto Bertolotti, team managers Jeff Parker and Duncan Holmes for organising and galvanising the team. Thanks also to all the coaches, committee members and band of loyal supporters who follow the side throughout the country, whose support throughout the years has been invaluable in establishing Lancaster as the top British side over the past 11/12 years.

Further thanks go to our sponsors D Lord & Sons, Alex Palmer Plumbing and Heating and Aqua Aid for their continued support which has enabled the side to operate in a professional manner.

The success this weekend was all the more impressive as at the start of the competition Manchester were installed as tournament favourites as Lancaster were missing three key players, Glen Robinson, Alex Parsonage and Scott Carpenter who are currently enjoying a spell down under playing in the Australian National Water Polo League. In view of this many water polo pundits had written their team mates chances off.

To bolster the side Lancaster had managed to draft in a couple of players, Italian Danieli Maggioni who although had not been training or playing regularly for the past four years, brought with him experience of playing in the Italian National League. Paul Cowburn, a solid and strong player from Tyldesley also joined the squad to bolster the defence and mid-bath.

### Semi Final

#### Lancaster V Rotherham

Lancaster welcomed back Captain Chris Hartley for the semi final clash with Rotherham Metro. This was a repeat of last year's thrilling final which Lancaster won by a single goal with under 10 seconds remaining.

Lancaster started strongly and soon established a 2:0 lead thanks to goals from Tom Curwen and Danieli Maggioni. Rotherham gathered their thoughts and managed to draw level with two efforts from England centre forward Adam Schofield. The sides exchanged further goals to end the quarter level at 3 each. Coach Bertolotti changed the game plan for the next quarter in what proved a decisive period of play. Lancaster stepped up the pace with wave after wave of swift counter attacks which the Yorkshire men had no answer to. Although it is a team effort to make counter attacks work, special mention must go to Tom Curwen who scored all 4 goals in the second quarter as Lancaster built up a decisive 7:3 advantage.



The third quarter was more a period of consolidation as the sides exchanged goals. Lancaster's contributions coming from Ciaran James, James Wannop and another long range special from Tom Curwen.

Lancaster started the final quarter in confident mood, knowing that it would take a major collapse to avoid the local side making the final. This was nether likely to happen as further goals from Maggioni and Curwen increased the advantage to 5 goals. The major incident in the final period was what can only be described as a 'bewildering' decision by referee Mike Jukes who excluded veteran forward Colin Burgess for what he perceived as 'mis-conduct' as Burgess attempted to recover the ball from Rotherham keeper Matt Birch. Lancaster finished the game victors by 13:8 but the mood in the dressing room was dismay as the side came to terms with the fact that talisman Burgess would be suspended for the final.

The second semi final produced a bit of a shock as the experienced side from Bristol overturned the odds to secure a hard fought victory over the young upstarts from Manchester to set up a final clash with Lancaster.

Lancaster and Bristol have dominated British Water Polo for over a decade, sharing the last fourteen National League titles between them.

Following completion of the semi finals, there was a flurry of activity as Team Manager Jeff Parker protested in vain with the match delegate and the referee over the decision which resulted in the suspension of Burgess.

## **Final**

**Lancaster 13          Bristol 7**

Lancaster are never more dangerous than when their backs are against the wall and the arrival of Italian coach Alberto Bertolotti has only served to further strengthen their resolve. The players do not like to be beaten and they responded superbly, producing a terrific team display which provided the foundations for prolific marksman Tom Curwen to lead the way to victory with 7 of the teams' goals, 4 of which came in the first period.

Credit to Italian Maggioni, who in the absence of Burgess, was a constant thorn in the Bristol defence and proved to be an effective target man for his team mates. Defensively keeper Dave Bush as so often was again on hand to prove himself worthy of 3 or 4 goals to his team whilst Chris Hartley and Paul Cowburn applied relentless pressure for Bristol's attackers who for much of the time were limited to long distance and nervy shots at goal.

Ciaran James, despite his youthful years showed why he is one of the countries stars of the future with some hardworking mid-bath play ably supported by Andy Squires and the improving Michael Brown. The three players dug deep throughout the match and relentlessly worked at tiring and testing Bristol's players so that by the time the final quarter started Bristol were already running out of steam.

## British Championships Finals Round 2010

### Report Jeff Parker



Although subs Zak Sly and Decland Ellwood remained unused on the bench just by their presence they boosted the morale of their team mates and helped to lessen the impact of the loss of Burgess to the side.

Right from the off Lancaster showed their intent. Good work from Maggioni secured a sending out and a penalty which led to Lancaster's and Curwen's first two goals inside the first three minutes. Goals from Chris Hartley and Curwen followed before Bristol got on the score. Lancaster already looked in control and further goals for our local side from Maggioni and a fourth for Curwen gave Lancaster a 6-1 lead at the end of the first quarter.

The second period proved a little tighter with Bush saving his team mates on a couple of occasions and Lancaster's attack losing some of its cutting edge. Bristol netted first but Ciaran James replied almost immediately with a powerful shot from some 8 metres out towards the wing. Bristol netted their third but Curwen was proving a persistent threat and he scored his fifth following a sharp break from defence leaving Lancaster 8-3 ahead at half time.

Bristol scored first less than a minute after the interval to reduce the deficit to four but within forty seconds James re-established Lancaster's five goal lead. Lancaster missed an opportunity to score from a man up but then successfully defended a man down situation when Bristol looked certain to score but the shot going the wrong side of the post.

It was marksman Curwen who showed the way with his sixth goal. The next goal came from Paul Cowburn who scored from five metres during a man-up situation after Maggioni had again been making a nuisance of himself to Bristol's defence resulting in their captain being excluded. Bristol had a chance to pull one back from a man up but when the shot came in Bush proved equal to it and the third quarter ended Lancaster 11-5 ahead.

One last push was expected from Bristol and they did score the first goal of the final period but they were already running out of steam. Lancaster looked in control and their work rate and team play had taken its toll on their experienced opponents. Lancaster settled their game and kept possession ensuing they did not leave the back door open for any sort of fight back. With three minutes left Bristol netted a seventh but with two minutes remaining, their captain knowing the game had been lost was excluded for the remainder of the match for misconduct.

That man Curwen converted the man up and to rub salt in the wounds Andy Squires broke three with a minute and thirty seconds left to slot home from a pass from James Wannop to finish the scoring.

Lancaster are now the most successful side ever in the history of the British Championships after securing a record breaking 9<sup>th</sup> title in the 26 year history of the tournament. This surpasses the record of the legendary London Poly side who dominated Water Polo in Great Britain prior to the emergence of the current Lancaster outfit.

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Lancaster City	9
Polytechnic	8
Bristol Central	4
Hamersmith Penguin	3
Rotherham Metro	1
Sutton & Cheam	1
	<b>26</b>

#### Final Squad:

D Bush, J Wannop, C Burgess, P Cowburn, D Maggioni, C Hartley, T Curwen, M Brown, A Squires, C James, D Ellwood, Z Sly.

Coach: Alberto Bertolotti

Managers: Jeff Parker & Duncan Holmes