



## SUTTON RFC LAY DOWN AN EARLY MARKER

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# Observer Sport

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**SWIMMING:** Boldmere Swimming Club's Juniors replicated the celebrations of sprint sensation Usain Bolt as they produced a champion performance of their own last week. And their inspiration was a good luck message from former club member, Paralympic ace Eleanor Simmonds. Turn inside to page 165 for the full story. Picture: Steve Harlow

### Skipper's all smiles as Walmley go up

#### CRICKET

SKIPPER Greg Ricketts hailed Walmley's perfect blend of youth and experience as they clinched a return to the top table of Midlands cricket last weekend.

An enthralling final day win over Coventry and North Warwickshire at Eldon Drive sealed the Division One runners-up spot for Walmley and with it promotion back to the Birmingham Premier.

And Ricketts – in his first season as skipper – said that every member of the squad, young and old, had played their part.

He said: "We all knew we needed to win to make sure of promotion and I think the experience in the squad got us through."

"Last season we had a lot of youngsters and we have more coming through but for them to learn, you need experience alongside them."

"We've had to choose a Player of the Season this past few days so I've asked all the lads and had five or six different names come back to me."

"That says it all because everybody has chipped by playing a big part at some point of the season."

"Speaking to a lot of opposition captains this season, they've said we deserved to go up and most have said we were the best team they've played."

"Going into the season, there wasn't any pressure on us to go up but a lot of the senior players wanted to do it so they can play more Birmingham Premier cricket before they perhaps step down."

And Ricketts is confident that Walmley will have enough about them to stay up next year.

He added: "If we can keep the players from this season, many of whom have performed in the Premier League



**Greg Ricketts has led Walmley to promotion in his first season as skipper**

in the past, I think we can stay there with the squad we've got."

"Maybe we can get one or two players to join us but I think with what we have here we can not just stay in the division but hopefully compete."

Turn to page 166 for a report of Walmley's win and all the final day cricket action.

# Keogh quits as Royals boss but still has big role to play

#### Football

By **MATT PANTER**  
Sport reporter

CHRIS Keogh quit his role as first team manager at Sutton Coldfield Town this week but has vowed to play a significant part in moving the Royals forward as a club.

Keogh has opted to take a seat on the club's board of directors after a disappointing start to the 2012-13 season, with the Royals languishing in 17th in EvoStik Division One South.

His former assistant Neil Tooth has been handed the managerial reins, working with coaches Ross Thorp, Royston Richardson and Andy Ling.

"I was thinking about standing down as manager at the end of last season," said Keogh, manager of Sutton for more than a decade.

"We brought in a lot of quality players in the summer but have not had the start I would have hoped for."

"Now just feels like the right time for change. I have had 12 years in the manager's position and it's time for a fresh

approach.

"Neil (Tooth) has worked as my assistant for a while now and he's someone I rate highly as a coach."

"When I made my decision, I recommended to the board that he be handed the job because it's important for us to have some continuity."

"I'm confident he will do a good job. I will take a step back now but am available to offer advice, should he need it."

Keogh insists he will still have a hands-on role at the club.

One of his remits will be to develop young talent, as part

of the Royals' link-up with the Metropolitan College.

"I'm excited by our link with the college, as part of the new Football Foundation," he said.

"We will be working with young footballers, to develop their skills, while they will be getting an education too."

"Hopefully we can start to bring through some really talented footballers for the under-21s and first team."

"It's important that we continue to progress as a football club."

"When I took over as manager, 12 years ago, Sutton

Coldfield Town was on the brink of folding.

"Through the hard work of people like my dad (Tom Keogh), Bernie Cheek and Alan Fleming, we have become a well run football club, which lives within its means, unlike a lot of clubs who are going to the wall."

"The new chairman Nick Thurston is continuing that and we are determined to keep the club progressing."

"I'm looking forward to taking a step back from first team duties and helping with the off-field progress. It's a new challenge for me."

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