

Observer Sport

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Phenomenal Penny takes yet more gold

by Michael Beardmore
SPORTS REPORTER

BOLDMERE Swimming Club's Penny Whittingham cemented her reputation as one of Britain's stars of the future in the pool by claiming five national titles last weekend.

As well as the quintet of gold medals, 11-year-old Whittingham won two silvers – while clubmate Jake Dixon also took silver at the ASA National Age Group Championships in Sheffield.

Whittingham's gold medals came in the 200m and 400m individual medleys plus the 200m, 400m and 800m freestyle, while she came second in the 100m and 200m fly – breaking seven club records in the process.

While being a Boldmere member Whittingham – and her teammates – were representing City of Birmingham at the event and junior team coach Carl Grosvenor was fulsome in his praise of her displays at the championships.

He told *Observer Sport*: "I've personally never coached anyone who has had that much success at the nationals – to get five gold medals and two silver is pretty remarkable."

"She's the best 11-year-old girl in Britain and she deserves it because she is dedicated and works hard."

"I don't really know how far she can go – you don't want to put too much pressure on youngsters, you just want them to enjoy their swimming."

Whittingham's teammate and fellow 11-year-old Dixon, meanwhile, broke a club record when taking second place in the final of the 200m individual medley in 2.36.75mins.

Boldmere's Emma Smith, 12, made the finals of the 200m freestyle and claimed personal bests in the heats of the 100m freestyle, 200m backstroke and 400m freestyle.

And Joshua Winnicott claimed a club record in the 13-year 200m breaststroke in 2.43.73mins.

Grosvenor added: "Jake is a good lad and only joined us this year, I think Boldmere passed him on to us in February."

"He's done well. Like Penny, he works hard and is very focused."

"Emma deserves credit too because just to make it to a national final is a pretty big achievement."

Grosvenor was quick to praise the impact that the Boldmere swimmers – also including Charlie Payne, Kristie Hackett and Alice Dearing – had on the City of Birmingham effort.

He said: "Boldmere do a great job of consistently feeding us great swimmers – they are the stand-out club within Birmingham."

"We get a lot of kids from Boldmere and I think we work quite well together."

"They swim galas and county championships for Boldmere but then everything apart from that they compete for City of Birmingham."

"They pass good kids on to us, we try to move them forward even further and then they get good results in the leagues for Boldmere – it works well for both sides."



Above: Penny Whittingham on her way to another gold in Sheffield and below: Jake Dixon claimed a silver medal. Right: The Boldmere Swimming club pair with City of Birmingham coach Carl Grosvenor. PICTURES BY STEVE HARLOW



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