

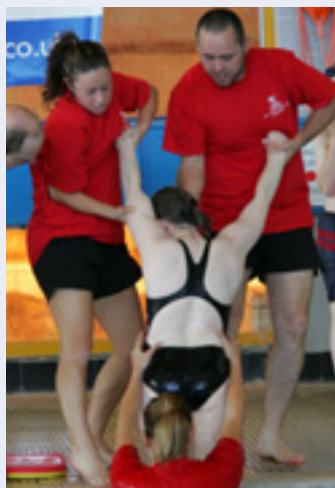
Dragons roar to victory

A Cardiff team narrowly triumphed in the ISRM/IQL National Lifeguard Challenge last month. Ian Wakefield reports

IN SEARING heat at the Stechford Cascades Leisure Pool in Birmingham, 13 teams of lifeguards took part in a closely-fought battle for supremacy.

The event, organised by ISRM and the Institute of Qualified Lifeguards, is a one-day competition designed to raise the profile of – and test and reward – the abilities of qualified pool lifeguards.

As soon as the teams were introduced to each other at the Woodlands Adventure Camp, an assault course venue, it was obvious that competitiveness was high. Great cheers went up after each team was



introduced, followed by football-style chants of 'Who are ya?' from the defending champions Birmingham City, which were all taken in good spirit.

Justifying their confidence, Birmingham City took an early lead in the first event, the assault course. They emerged with a 45-second advantage over their next nearest rivals, which they achieved through a combination of aggressively attacking the course, superior teamwork and great support from colleagues.

The second event – First Aid incident – took place in the plant room and centred on a simulated explosion that had caused an array of gruesome wounds (courtesy of our three volunteer make-up artists). This incident was, in general, dealt with very well, with the winning effort coming from a slick team from Hull Leisure.

DC Leisure's team, Pavilions in the Park, won the third event – pool incident – convincingly. They acted proactively and effectively to ensure the damage from any incidents was minimised. There was hilarity for some spectators when Birmingham City were penalised for rescuing too



Celebration from the winners from Cardiff.

Emma Bentley, of the Cariba Creek team from Alton Towers, deals with a 'casualty' in the pool.



'There was hilarity for some spectators when Birmingham City were penalised for rescuing too many people'

many people. One young lad, who was incidental to the exercise, was deemed to be a weak swimmer and was rescued 'Baywatch style' by a member of the Birmingham Team; the poor lad must have wondered what hit him.

The fourth event was the rescue relay which, for the first time, was performed with adult casualties. This really was a crowd-pleaser with supporters creating a deafening atmosphere cheering on their teams – the Lord Mayor who was seated next to me, was a little surprised at the amount of enthusiasm in the room.

Following a nail-biting battle, two teams came out on top: Cariba Creek Water Park and Biddulph Valley Leisure centre.

The penultimate event was the 'Individual Rescue Relay'; once again Biddulph Valley proved they had the strongest swimmers in the event by securing a convincing win.

With only one event to go, the rope throw relay, Birmingham City were still leading by a significant margin and it seemed inevitable that the trophy would once again be going to the West Midlands. Cardiff Dragons had obviously not read the script and – spurred on by the Red

Dragon Man – screaming encouragement for his team, they kept a cool head under pressure, made the least mistakes and secured an important victory.

There was a nervous wait for the final result, and the pressure was such that a recount was required – but finally the Cardiff Dragons pipped Birmingham to the post by winning the last event. Biddulph Valley finished a close third.

A great day was had by all. Andy Ebben, the compere, offered thanks to the many people behind the scenes who had helped to make the event such a success. These included everyone from the organising committee, ISRM and IQL staff, volunteers and centre staff and Birmingham City Council for providing an excellent venue.

A special thanks from ISRM and IQL to Pete Whittal, event manager, ISRM member and RLSS trainer assessor, for his leadership in ensuring the event was a success. We hope to build on this success and make the event even better next year.

ROLL OF HONOUR

WINNERS: Cardiff Dragons
SECOND: Birmingham City
THIRD: Biddulph Valley