

Five West Suffolk Swimming Club athletes travelled to Ponds Forge International Sports Centre in Sheffield to compete against the fastest swimmers in the country in the British Swimming Championships 2023 (held from 4 – 9 April).

In a field including Olympic and Commonwealth Games, FINA World Championships and World Aquatics Championships medalists, just making the qualifying times was a laudable achievement.

The first day of racing started fabulously with nineteen year old Angharad Evans from Abington qualifying in fifth place for the women's 50m breaststroke A Final (the eight fastest qualifiers from the heats) with a season's best time. Sixteen year old Abbeygate Sixth Form College student Matthew Baker followed up with a near three seconds pb time in his first race - the 400m freestyle – missing out on the Junior Final (for athletes born during or after 2005) by just three tenths of a second. In the evening's women's 50m breaststroke A Final Angharad improved on her season's best time from earlier in the day, leapfrogging to third place to win a brilliant bronze medal.

The following day saw eighteen year old Tom Page post a fantastic new pb in the 50m breaststroke, missing out on the Priority Paris Final (for athletes born after 2000) by just over three tenths of a second. Wednesday also saw Linton's Charlotte White take on the 50m butterfly and Angharad Evans her least-favoured breaststroke distance, the 200m, with both finishing just off their season's best times.

Thursday's action saw Matthew Baker achieving another amazing pb in the 100m freestyle race, frustratingly just out of the Junior Final, with long distance swimmer Myles Turner competing in the gruelling 400m individual medley race with a new season's best. This was a fantastic performance from Turner, whose work commitments mean that he can only train three times a week.

The men's and women's 200m individual medley took place on Saturday, with Matthew Baker and Charlotte White racing. Charlotte was just outside her best time, dropping the pace in the final 100m after a strong first 100m. Matthew posted another a great pb, again just three tenths of a second off qualifying for the Junior Final.

Tom Page and Charlotte White competed in the 50m and 100m butterfly respectively on the last day of the Championships, both finishing just over their season's best times. Excitement in the West Suffolk camp mounted as Angharad Evans accomplished a new pb in the 100m breaststroke, qualifying for the evening's A Final with the third fastest time, with Matthew Baker producing a two and a half second PB in the 200m freestyle to qualify for the Junior Final with the second fastest time.

Angharad pulled another pb out of the bag in the women's 100m breaststroke final, winning her second bronze medal of the championships and Matthew also built on his new pb from the qualifying round to take a very pleasing third place in the Junior Final.



Angharad Evans with her bronze medal for the 50m breaststroke (she also took bronze for the 100m breaststroke)

Head Coach Dan Pilbrow was very pleased with the swims over the week, particularly with Matthew's consistent and impressive performance at this level at just sixteen years old and with Angharad's results raising her profile ahead of the international selection window.