

West Suffolk swimmer Matthew Baker excelled at the Swim England National Winter Championships held in Sheffield last weekend.

Demonstrating great versatility, he qualified for five different events – freestyle over 50m, 100m, 200m and 400m and 100m butterfly. Matthew, who just turned 16 in June, was one of the youngest competitors in Sheffield, competing against the very best swimmers from clubs and universities across the country.

After narrowly finishing just outside his personal best times on the sprint races, double East Region champion Matthew gave outstanding performances on the final day of racing. In the 400m freestyle heat, he took more than two seconds off his gold medal winning personal best time set at the East Region Championships last month to qualify for the final. Come the evening final, he bettered this time by another two and half seconds, finishing as the eighth fastest swimmer in a tight field in the 18-and-under men's age group and as the thirteenth fastest male overall in this event.

In the 200m freestyle event, in which he is also the reigning Regional Champion, Matthew impressed again, making a one second gain on his personal best from Regionals to qualify for the final, cutting this by nearly a second more in the final itself. Again, in a bunched field, Matthew finished as the seventh fastest swimmer in the 18-and-under category and the twelfth fastest male competitor overall.



Head coach and team manager Dan Pilbrow was delighted with Matthew's success, tipping him as a future star.

Fellow West Suffolk Swimming Club swimmers Charlotte White, Jake Thomas-Mansfield and Myles Turner also represented the Club at English Nationals. Charlotte had a busy weekend of racing, also competing in five events; the individual medley over 100m and 200m, butterfly over 50m and 100m and 200m breaststroke, in which she looked very strong after a long race absence. Myles also demonstrated his versatility in all strokes in the 200m individual medley race and Jake raced the 100m and 200m butterfly, putting in a season's best performance in the latter, finishing just 0.1 second outside his personal best.

West Suffolk swimmers will continue training over the festive season, with the next focus the Suffolk County Championships to be held in Ipswich in January.