

West Suffolk Swimming Club swimmer Mark Holmes was one of three men and six women selected by 'Sport Excel UK' from the Down Syndrome Swimming GB team to represent Great Britain at the sixth edition of the Virtus Global Games in Vichy, France at the beginning of June.

This is the signature event for athletes with intellectual impairments and provides them with the opportunity to compete at the highest level in an international multi-sport elite competition. This edition of the games featured some of the world's most successful Para athletes, including medallists from the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Mark travelled to Vichy on 2 June, the day after his 40th birthday, to acclimatise before competition commenced in the 50 metre, eight lane outdoor pool. The event was televised in France and also available on YouTube to cater to the global audience.

Mark, a backstroke specialist, was delighted with his swims against the world's best, just missing the final but coming a pleasing 9th place in the 200m and 10th in the 100m backstroke. In the gruelling 400m individual Mark excelled himself, finishing in 5th place overall.



Mark also swam the backstroke leg in the mixed medley relays, with the GB quartet coming 5th in the 4 x 50m race and just out of the medals in the 4 x 100m medley, finishing in fourth place.



With expert guidance from WSSC coach Phil Ward, Mark is now in training for the Down Syndrome European Championships to be held in Padova, Italy in September.