

Nationals 2010

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I got an NQT in 200m breaststroke at the London Regionals at Crystal Palace in June. I had qualified to enter 100 and 200m breaststroke at the National Age Group Championships in Sheffield. I felt really happy and proud. Lots of people said well done and I even got my full PE colours at school because of it.

The event was 28 to 31 July. As the date got closer, I got more nervous.

We got to Sheffield last Tuesday. When we walked into the Ponds Forge Arena my first impression was that the pool was MASSIVE. It is a 50m pool with 10 lanes. Everything is videoed and shown on 2 large TV screens at the ends of the pool. It was very hot and although there is masses of seating there still wasn't enough for all the people who showed up to watch.

My first race was the 200m breaststroke on Wednesday morning. I was looking forward to it, but at the same time I felt like I didn't want to do it. The atmosphere in the morning was really, really nerve-wracking. As the competition started, they played loud, dramatic music. I stood on the blocks for my first race, and then all my nerves and thoughts and feelings went away. I just dove in and swam. When I finished I looked up at the board to see my time and was quite pleased with it. I had got a 4 second PB and swam the race in 3:04 something. But then I heard the announcer say that there was a disqualification from my lane. I was annoyed, but it was all part of the experience.

From that point on I felt more confident and the Nationals was just like a normal gala, but in Sheffield. My next event was on Saturday so I had 2 days in between with a bit of training, watching Julian in his races on Thursday, going round Sheffield and watching movies in the hotel room.

On Saturday morning I was excited and hopeful about the 100m breaststroke. I was aiming to get into the final. This time I felt smooth in the water and I knew I was ahead of everyone else. I won my heat! I looked up at the end to see my time and was so happy. I had swum it in 1:22.68, easily beating my PB of 1:26.77. I had made it to the final and was ranked 3rd.

The finals started at 5pm that afternoon. I felt nervous and excited. There was music between each race and we were all introduced individually. It was even more exciting than the morning and I knew that this time if I did well I could win a medal.

My race started off OK. From what I could see from the corner of my eye I was in third or fourth position. I pushed off from the turn and I seemed briefly to be in first position, but some others caught up with me. When I finished I had no idea how I had done. We were all very close together. I looked up at the board and saw that I had come fourth, 0.07 seconds behind bronze. I had swum faster than in the morning, finishing in a PB of 1:21.03. The gold medallist did it in 1:19.97. I was annoyed that I was just outside the medals but I didn't mind that much because at the beginning of the week I hadn't even thought I could make it to a final, I just hoped to do a PB.

Overall the experience of going to the Nationals was really fun. I'd like to do it all again right now, and can't wait till next year!