



Although the first league competition took place in 1965, it was a further four years during which the other leagues came into existence, before the first inter-league final took place. This year we were ousted from our designated finals weekend, the third weekend in April because British Swimming decided to use our weekend for their Nationals. They did not advise me until all our bookings had been secured, so I had not only to unscramble everything, but had to find a new date. With the help of England Talent and the Manager of the Swimming Management Group, we ended up with 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> April; not ideal, but the best we could do. Two clubs decided at that point that they would not attend, even if they qualified for the final, because of the effect on their senior swimmers so close to the BS Nationals. Another club advised me that they would be away at a long course warm weather training camp. This allowed three other clubs to participate in the finals although they would not have been invited in the normal course of events.

The finals weekend was again fantastic; sponsored by Solo Sport Brands, under the umbrella of Arena. Cardiff International Pool is a superb venue for our finals, and the Parkwood pool operators are second to none, and cannot do enough to help us succeed. They initially accommodated our change of date, and then cooperated throughout. The 17<sup>th</sup> B final on the Saturday was expected to be an exciting competition, and the bright sunny day started off very well. Then there was a phone call from the Ealing team, advising that their bus had broken down and they were likely to be late! The team eventually only arrived a few minutes late and they went straight into the warm-up which was extended for ten minutes. The opening ceremony was led by the Swim England President, Anne Reah, and the competition went very smoothly. Ealing, despite their late arrival, obviously had the bit between their teeth as they pretty much led from the start. They not only won the overall competition, but also the relay challenge. Sevenoaks were the runners-up, with Thanet in third place. In the relay events, Thanet were the runners-up, and City of Liverpool third. The 48<sup>th</sup> Cup Final had no hic-cups with the arrival of the teams, and they also had a bright sunny day. Cardiff started off strongly, but Millfield then got into their stride and romped away to a fine win, also winning the relay challenge. Plymouth Leander were the runners-up overall and in the relay challenge, followed by City of Cardiff third in both competitions. Exceptionally there were no finals records broken this year. This may be owing to the proximity to the British Swimming Nationals which happened ten days later.

Domestically the rounds happened with few major challenges, but it is apparent that clubs need to ensure that they have the correct staff at the events. Each club should have sufficient qualified team managers as well their coaches and the correct officials. At the beginning of 2017 the ASA amended their licensing rules to allow the licensing of leagues. Whilst ideally all rounds of each league should be licensed, practically it will not always be achievable, owing to the facilities available. Whether or not the galas are licensed, ALL clubs should ensure that their teams are supported by the correctly qualified and the required number of officials. All officials should also be licensed. Each league should aim to license all their rounds by 2018, giving notice to their clubs to get the correctly qualified officials in place for the 2018 season. Registration fees may have to increase to get the correct facilities with AOE, so that we can give our athletes the best experience of the only national senior inter-club league in the United Kingdom.

Unfortunately once again there is a lack of interest in the league in the North East, and it looks likely that they will not be in operation in 2017/18. This is not only sad for the athletes, but is a blow to the League, as we will rightly lose some sponsorship. This also affects how the participants in the finals are arrived at. A proposal will be taken to the National AGM about this. It is necessary for all leagues to be involved in the finals weekend, but also to make the Cup Final a better final. This year the Cup Final points had the winners with 402 points and tenth place 144 points. That is a too greater difference to be fair for all the teams. The proposal will be that all leagues will be involved in the finals weekend, and ALL winners of the leagues will participate, and it will be dependent on the virtual gala as to which gala they are invited to. All other invitees will be as to the result of the virtual gala.

A proposal for the future, is to have all rounds with AOE and ideally licensed, then we can have a national league table, not just the individual league tables. A big challenge and one that will require the co-operation of many volunteers across the country. Talking of volunteers - a big thank you to all those who ensure that the league rounds and the finals weekend take place. Administrators and officials - it would not happen without you. Likewise it would not happen without the sponsorship and support of Solo Sport Brands and all the other organisations which support us. THANK YOU.