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GNSC's gala joy

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GRAVESEND and Northfleet Swimming Club's (GNSC) youngsters attended the 2010 Medway Gala last Saturday - the first in a series of five such events from February to October, writes David Parish.

Competitors swim one age-group race at each meeting and there is also an open contest, in which any age group can enter. Sam Jones, nine, and Connor Lowry, 12, both swam personal bests (PBs) in the 50m backstroke and 100m individual medley respectively to reach the final of those disciplines. They then received medals for those commendable achievements. Nicole Parish, 11, won gold in the 100m butterfly and also finished second in the junior/U16 200m individual medley, while 13-year-old Emma Bannister was the runner-up too in the 100m freestyle.

Emma Bannister did though claim the junior 200m individual medley trophy, finishing ahead of fourth-placed clubmate Kelsey Simmonds, who achieved the same position in the 100m freestyle as well. Meanwhile, the GNSC girls' relay team (Jasmine Jones, Nikki Read, Emma Bannister and Kelsey Simmonds) obtained third in the 4x50m freestyle. GNSC's other challengers all swam well, with some big PBs being clocked on the day.

THE CLUB hope to make a huge impact at the Kent County Championships in Gillingham, which get underway this Saturday and run every weekend until Sunday, March 7.

The meeting represents one of the highlights of the season and - having recently gained promotion in the Kent Junior League - GNSC now have 17 swimmers who have qualified for 99 events, plus six contenders involved in eight relays. Those numbers are a huge increase on last year (13 swimmers/51 disciplines) and that upturn is due to the determination from the participating club members and leadership of new head coach, Richard Skirving, and his team.

GNSC has also secured sponsorship for the upcoming competition from Synergy, who are actively involved in the construction of the London 2012 Olympic Games.

For further information about Gravesend and Northfleet Swimming Club, visit their official website at:

www.gnsc.co.uk.