

## February

LANCASTER were already assured of victory before the final weekend of National League play, with just the runners-up and minor places to be decided in the remaining games. Lancaster had to battle hard for victories in their home pool against Manchester and Bristol but, in the end, maximum points ensured the club's 10th championship title in 13 years. Scott Carpenter, of Lancaster, won the Peter Olsen Trophy as the top marksman in Division One for a third consecutive season with 78 goals.

Rotherham claimed the second spot with Manchester third. Polytechnic's proud record of being the only ever-present club in Division One throughout the league's 47-year history ended when they went down 10-8 to relegation rivals Portobello at Millfield School.

Tyldesley took the Division Two title, Croydon Amphibians topped Division Three and newcomers Swindon Dolphin won Division Four after dropping just one point during the season.

City of Leeds won promotion to Division Two when they defeated Hucknall 12-10 in the play-off at Loughborough University on December 6. Success for Leeds means the club regains Division Two status after a one-year absence. University of Bristol won promotion to Division Three with a 10-8 victory over Ealing in a play-off at Walsall Gala Baths on December 14.

## Applications

Three teams have applied to join the league for the 2009 season.

The applications from Carlisle, Exeter City and Worthing will be considered in January by the NWPL committee.

There has been one resignation – from Division Four club Weymouth & Portland, who this season included a number of Exeter-based players.

#### Online

Water polo fans can keep up with all the latest NWPL news on [www.nwpl.co.uk](http://www.nwpl.co.uk). The hugely popular site achieved record hits of more than 1.5 million during 2008, a 25 per cent increase on the previous year.

#### women's League

The National Women's Water Polo League was due to be decided during the extravaganza in Manchester over the weekend of January 17-18. All four divisions were playing during the weekend, bringing the whole sport together to decide the 2009 winners and determine who must play-off to avoid relegation or gain promotion for the 2009-10 season. Liverpool A had a one-point lead over Manchester A at the top of Division One with Tisbury looking like the team most likely to be relegated.

Otter A appeared to be clear leaders in Division Two with Solihull and Haywards Heath both in contention for the runners-up spot. Hucknall Ladies looked destined for Division Three, just as their men's team have also been relegated to their equivalent division.

Manchester C have been the team to beat in Division Three, indicating the depth of players as the team looks destined for the higher division next season. Sunderland have struggled, with no wins so far but had everything to play for in Manchester. Otter B looked likely to replace them as they topped the Division Four table and aimed for promotion.

#### Champions Cup

Manchester and Penguin have been in Champions Cup action (the equivalent of football's Champions League) but both teams suffered three out of three defeats despite the

home advantage of playing games at Manchester's Aquatic Centre.

Manchester's Mike Glover said: 'We were pleased to get there and we should have won the game against the French team, where we lost 11-10. We lost 8-1 against the Dutch team and failed to capitalise on 10 man-ups that we had during the game. We're now looking to qualify again for next year.'

Manchester qualified for the cup after winning the 2008 British Championship when Penguin were runners-up. Penguin's Rebecca Fraser is apprehensive about whether the team will qualify again this year, as they are struggling for players because so many of their squad tend to be from abroad.

#### Liverpool Ladies

Liverpool and Sheffield women's teams have been in action in Europe, playing in the LEN Trophy. Liverpool fared better than Sheffield, with two wins and a draw during the group B qualification games in Belgrade – excellent results against some of Europe's top teams. However, all three games were lost during the subsequent preliminary rounds in Greece in early January.