

THE RISING STAR FROM ROCHDALE



Keri-Anne Payne
LONG DISTANCEPOTENTIAL

I LEARNED TO swim at the age of two and joined my older brother who trained at Ellis Park Swimming Pool in Johannesburg. I still keep in touch with my coach in South Africa to this day. After moving to England I joined Rochdale's Aquabears and get on well with my coach Dave Crouch. He's got me to where I am now.

After last year's National Age Group Championships I was told of my selection to the British team for the Four-Nations in Italy in December. I was only to swim in the relays but it was my first international competition. We won the 4 x 200m freestyle and took bronze in the 4 x 100m. Then I was invited to join a Training Camp for long distance swimmers on the Sunshine Coast of Australia in February. This was a good experience for me as I got to swim with Rebecca Cooke who's now the 400m and 800m Commonwealth champion.

I swam the 400m and 4 x 200m freestyle in the Six Nations Juniors in Glasgow. I was in the first 400m heat so I had to swim my own race and just get as good a time as I could. I won my heat in 4min 21.49sec, a personal best. Watching the last heat, I knew I'd won the gold medal with 10m still to go. I'd hoped for a medal, but I didn't expect gold. We won the relay, too.

Then came the Commonwealth Trials at Manchester. I had a great swim in the 800m with a PB of 8min 55.31sec. I couldn't match that in the final on the same night, but still I'd made the European Junior Championships team.

I was invited to a Distance Swimming Camp in Manchester during May, where I met the senior

swimmers for the first time. I seemed to get on well with them all, but I had to leave early for the World Schools Games in Caen. I only managed 4min 25sec in the heats of the 400m freestyle, but I won the final in a new World School Record of 4min 17.54sec. I was really nervous because I was up against the world's top under-18 athletes. Winning this really boosted my confidence.

Next event was the European Junior Championships in Austria in July. I'd been training hard for the 800m, but Jo Jackson took sick and I took her place in the 4 x 200m. I swam the anchor leg in a PB of 2min 03.84sec, the team taking third place. I was also third in the 800m with another PB – 8min 44.47sec.

I came back from Austria to prepare for the National Age Groups, but I was invited to go with some of the Commonwealth swimmers to the Greek Nationals and then to Cyprus for a training camp. This was exciting. I entered the 200m, 400m and 800m freestyle. I did a PB in the 400m freestyle with 4min 17.34sec and swam the 800m in 8min 42.89sec. I had a really great time there.

At Cambridge for the British Short Course Championships I swam the 200m IM in 2min 21.54 sec, finishing ninth overall but first in the juniors. The next day I was first in the juniors and second overall in the 800m and my time qualified me for the European short course Championships in December. On day three I got another qualifying time in the 400m free, winning gold in the juniors. At 14 it's just been an amazing year for me.

KERI-ANNE'S CONQUESTS		
4 Nations Mestre, Italy		
1st	4 x 200m free relay	
3rd	4 x 100m free relay	
6 Nations Glasgow		
1st	400m free	4:21:49
1st	4 x 200m free relay	
World Schools Games Caen, France		
1st	400m free	4:17:54
European Juniors Linz, Austria		
3rd	800m free	8:44:47
3rd	4 x 200m free relay	
Greek Nationals Athens		
1st	800m free	8:42:98
2nd	400m free	4:17:34
6th	200m free	2:06:17

A bronze medal in a golden year: **Keri-Anne Payne** took third place in the 800m freestyle at the **European Junior Championships** in Austria, behind Yana Tolkatheva of Russia (left) and Reka Nagy of Hungary (middle). Only 0.83sec separated the three of them at the finish

