



Octopush News

Edition 6,
Autumn 2003

The magazine of the British Octopush Association, the ruling body for underwater hockey in the UK

Red tape hits sport



BIG changes are happening in the world of underwater hockey—and you're not going to like it.

New UK laws coming into effect in the next year mean everyone involved in running an octopush club or a team will have to register with the authorities to find out if they have criminal convictions.

They will also have to attend courses to make sure they

don't abuse their positions. (P6-7).

And, in international octopush, PLAYERS will soon have to qualify as REFEREES in order to attend tournaments.

The rule has been instituted by the world underwater hockey ruling body, Cmas, to make sure everyone who takes part in the sport gets the most out of it.

LOBBY

Boa Chief Referee Neil Dixon, who also represents our views to Cmas, says: "We will do all we can to prevent this rule from being

introduced. Britain is lobbying hard to persuade the world authorities to make this scheme voluntary.

QUALIFIED

"But players who want to go to the 2006 world championships would do well to get qualified now, just in case."

**PICTURED: A Xarifa player in Manchester gets ready for criminal checks. Photo: PHIL THOMPSON.*

Inside...



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People and Places

New intake for sport's top jobs



IN: Sue



OUT: Fiona

THE NATIONAL Squads meeting approved a number of new appointments to Boa posts.

Terry Jackson takes over as Ladies' Elite Manager.

He replaces **Rob Liscoe**, who has decided to step back from national team administration.

Terry works as a civil engineer for Exeter Council in Devon.

He has never played the sport. But his daughter Jenna has represented GB ladies.

"It's going to be a steep learning curve, but already people have been offering help," he says.

Sue Mitchell replaces Fiona Buttery as temporary Secretary. Fiona is devoting more time to her MBA studies.

Sue is a full-time personal assistant at Yell, formerly known as Yellow Pages.

Steve Prince is stepping down as Boa Vice-chairman.

He's moving back to his native Australia later in the year.

Steve is a computer programmer who has spent much of the year updating the association's web presence (see page 8).

A short list of replacements is being drawn up.

Mark Sullivan is the new Competitions Manager, replacing the popular **Michele Wok**,

who is also moving Down Under to further her career as a vet. ("Down udder," surely? Ed.)

Mark is currently vetting new swimming pools for national competitions, but says the Nautilus will still be held at Crystal Palace this year.

He says: "Keep watching the website and Octopush News for more announcements."

A search is underway to get a suitable full-time coach for the Ladies' Elite team.

Alistair Skeen, an Orkney teacher, is the new under 19s' manager.

He began playing octopush in the 1970s, while a Bristol University Student.

Alistair started playing with his current club in 1991, and served as the Boa's junior competitions manager for four years — keeping a vital aspect of the sport afloat.

Thanks to all the retiring post-holders. Our sport would not be the same without you.

Your efforts mean that British octopush is working together in a more optimistic and positive way than for many years.

And good luck to the new appointees as we prepare for the World Championships in New Zealand next year.

TIMARNOLD

Raising Our Game

**By Perry Rich,
National Squads
Manager**



BLUEPRINT 2006 is the Boa's development plan to regain our rightful place in world hockey.

It was agreed at the national squads meeting recently as the best way forward for our game.

We invented this wonderful sport, after all.

But no country will hand results on a plate to us.

The only solution is for us all to work together. And work smarter.

I have noticed that the UK game has been far too fragmented and divided over recent years.

True, the personal enthusiasm has been there — and commitment, too.

However, this scrappy way of working has not been successful in delivering medals.

That in turn has let to a blame game of people accusing others of letting our country down.

This approach has been divisive, pointless, and damaging to our international prospects.

I say the tragedy is that people have not realised that we, as a sport, would be much stronger if we acted together.



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE: The BOA will use regional pools for UK training

The good news is that the squads meeting decided to put all this behind us and focus together as one sport, one association, and one country, in order to attain our common goal of getting back on top of international octopush.

I think it can be done. And here's how we are going to do it.

There should be an explicit recognition that the GB elite squads are the peak of our game.

So we need to put into effect a ladder which gives a natural progression from novices through to national players. A golden thread of commitment and excellence running right the way through British underwater hockey.

We must make people assume from the first time they get into the water that they can, and must, aim for the top.

This new style will need to be carefully managed, in order to prevent the previous stop/go management approach of stumbling from the European Championships to the Worlds and back again with little or no continuity of purpose.

True, there are some players and coaches that don't stop. I applaud them.

However, all of us, even when we wind down in the summer, need to keep a basic level of fitness so we are better prepared

"We must regain the top position in the sport we created"

for the next event.

Our management procedures, too, should not turn to dust and blow away at the end of a championship.

We must use this down time in a more effective way, starting with regular meetings to discuss tactics and direction.

Another objective I have is to set up four regional centres of excellence where all prospective GB players can get together and can train as Team UK.

These will be based at regional pools up and down the country.

This will make it easier for people to attend. I wouldn't expect all prospective squad members to go to all the sessions — just to the ones in their two nearest regional centres.

These innovations will lead to many economies of scale. The cash saved can then be re-invested in the sharp end of the sport.

For example, I would like to see some of this new money being used to subsidise people who travel the farthest distances. We can also have longer sessions — and more of them, too.

Communication of ideas between the teams would also be greatly encouraged

We can involve more experts advisers, too. Of course, the actual training priorities for the teams would still be decided by individual coaches and players.

But, overall, it's a winning package which really will raise our game.

Cash Crisis

British Octopus is running out of money. That's why the subscriptions are rising. By Tim Arnold, Chairman



UNDERWATER HOCKEY in the UK is still reeling from the effects of massive insurance hikes in the aftermath of the World Trade Centre bombing.

The resulting cash shortage leaves the Boa with only the barest of funds to survive.

Yet raising subscriptions is not necessarily the answer, for it puts off the less committed clubs from re-joining — and we lose net income.

Last year's basic subs were £145 per club. That provided us with an income of around £7 500. Of that, nearly £5 000 went on insurance. We just about broke even.

This year, our insurance quote is more than £6 000. That's why we are having to put up the subs to £180.

The move means that we can continue to run the association at around the same level of benefits as last year.

Our alternative would be to cut back on our other core services of Octopush News and subsidising the national squads.

Each each individual club player should only have to contribute between £10 and £20 per year, even with the new adjustments in insurance. — that's 20p to 40p a week per person.

For that, the association currently funds the following benefits.

● **Octopush News.** Each issue costs around £430, just to print and mail (layout and editorial is done by volunteer labour). We are constitutionally obliged to publish at least three times a year (£1290).

● **Cash support** for the national teams. This is normally worth around £1000, which goes towards the entry fees for European and World hockey events.

● **Representing** our sport to national bodies such as the Sports Council and the British Underwater Sports Association. Without these links, we could not send national teams to play in international championships.

That's because Cmas, the world ruling body, will not allow the Boa to directly join it. We have to go through a third party.

● **Developing** coaching manuals and referees courses (Around 50 people successfully graduated last year.)

This is especially important for international players as they will soon not be eligible to compete abroad without an appropriate referee's qualification.

● **Organising** national championships such as the Nautilus and National Finals.

● **Holding** meetings where players can directly elect the officials who represent them.

● **An improved,** professional website, where players can get up-to-date information about their sport. It will soon also be used as a valuable tool to recruit new octopush players.

● **Bearing** the administrative burden of disclosing players' records to the authorities (without this, the Boa would fold).

● **Organising** coaching events.

Looking at the above, it is nothing short of miraculous that the association does its work so effectively.

But cracks are starting to appear. The increasing insurance burden is putting a real strain on our finances.

A working party is getting underway to consider moving towards individual, instead of club, membership.

We also hope to raise more cash through sponsorship and selling advertising in Octopush News.

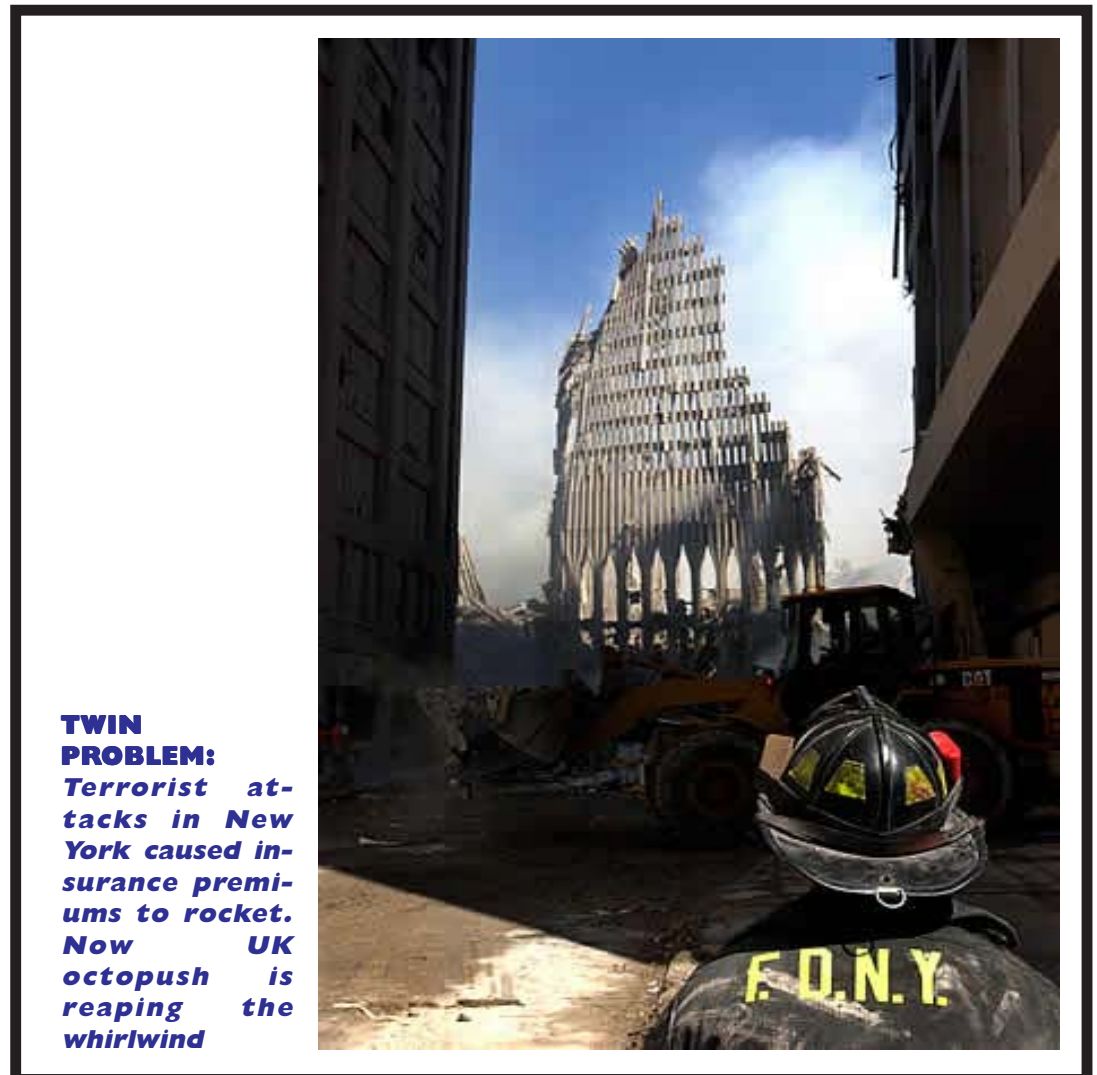
I hope you agree this edition is the best ever, and something which will really interest advertisers.

A tanner a year to run the Boa and get insurance? Yes, that's 20p a week. Peanuts.

We will not be able to move forward as a sport until we get more investment. That means more coming from players.

Our athletes already endure financial burdens which do not hit players from other countries.

I would like to give them more from Boa funds. But we cannot do that without yet another big rise in subscriptions.



TWIN PROBLEM: Terrorist attacks in New York caused insurance premiums to rocket. Now UK octopush is reaping the whirlwind

Keeping The

IT IS A SAD fact of life that all sports attract some people who only take part in order to further their own ambitions.

Fair enough. But it is quite another thing when those people take advantage of their positions by foisting themselves onto the young and vulnerable.

That's one reason why the Boa is co-operating with tough government legislation intended at stamping out the sickos from sport.

Ministers are about to implement a new law which forces all sporting bodies (amongst others), even the small ones, to introduce complex measures to check all post holders for past criminal activity.

SQUADS

Previously, it was merely best practice to carry out criminal checks for people who might be in contact with minors (those people under 18 years).

Now the idea is to be given legal force — and extended to anyone in a local octopush club or indeed the Boa who has a position of responsibility, from chairman to club coach to secretary to national squads manager.

The new government rules will now apply even if you are not working directly with minors.

Ministers say the developments will make organisations visibly more transparent, open and safe for their members or prospective members, of any age. But we need to take steps now to fall in with the new rules.

Otherwise, the Boa will cease to function in just over a year.

Last year, the Boa asked people doing national squads work to get police checks. *A few did. Most did not.*

POLICY

This year, as part of falling into line with the forthcoming legislation, anyone seeking to work with the national squads needs to be 'disclosed' so that the BOA can start the necessary checking process as easily as possible — and with the minimum of expense.

This policy will gradually be rolled out throughout the rest of the association to comply with the law.

We also have documents which will help people setting up clubs to make sure they comply with the law.

WAKE UP CALL

This may seem like a great deal of red tape.

But clubs which do not comply with the law will probably be banned from hiring pools when the legislation comes into force.

The sporting authorities are making it clear — this law is going to work.

They say the legislation should also act as a "wake-up" call to people who may have cast a blind eye at others who they suspect of getting up to mischief.

The civil law already provides a minefield for people who want to look the other way when inappropriate activity is going on. And not just acts involving minors.

So the message to anyone involved in sport is clear: you *have* to clear up your act.

There are severe penalties for those who take part in this disgusting behaviour — and those who cover it up.

***The Boa wants to hear from anyone with information about inappropriate activities in our sport. Email details to SLiscoe@aol.com**

Find these documents

HERE is what you need to start the process of being checked out to work with the vulnerable.

Those documents are broken down into two groups:

Group 1 Documents

Valid Passport
UK driving licence
Original UK Birth Certificate
Valid Photo ID card
UK Firearms Licence

Group 2 Documents

P45/P60
Marriage certificate
Non-original UK birth certificate
Bank or building society statement
Utility bill
Valid TV licence
Credit card statement
Mortgage statement
Valid NHS card
NI number card
Visa/work permit

The good news is that you don't have to produce each of the documents — just one document from Group 1 and two further documents from Groups 1 or 2... OR five documents from Group 2 only.

Each person will also need to provide details of a character referee known to them for at least two years, with a full name and address, as well as their own NI number and bank details.

Get Sickos Out

***BSAC
thought
it could
never
happen
to
them***



Picture posed by model

PREVENTION is better than cure.

That's why the Boa has put together a leaflet aimed at fighting all kinds of abuse.

The publication is written in association with the British Sub-Aqua Club, which knows only too well about what happens if you ignore the warning signs of inappropriate activity.

A number of legal cases involving sickening cases of abuse — too nasty for a family publication like Octopush News to list— forced the Bsac to act.

That group is now helping the British Octopush Association to put together policies which will protect the vulnerable from perverts.

Bsac is also offering to act as a "clearing house" for applications from our association.

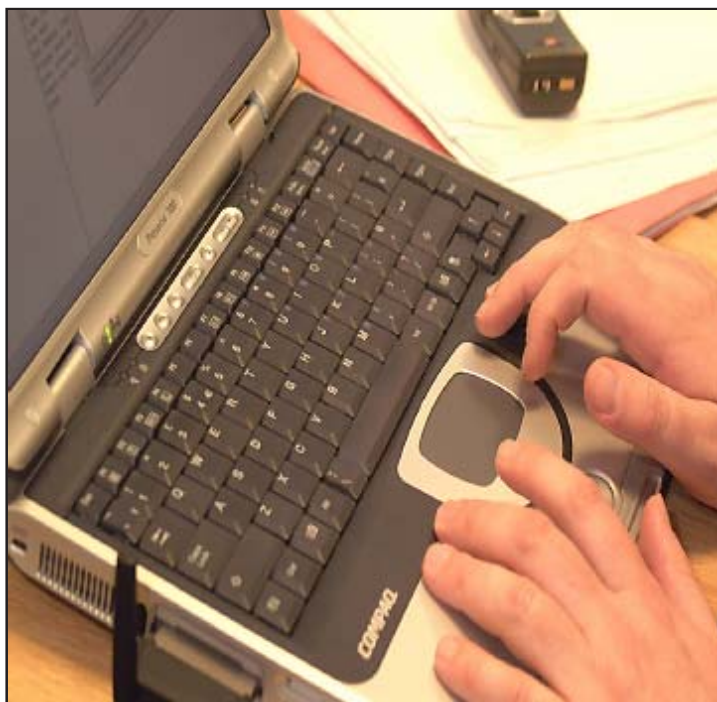
This will save us time and money. Bsac will also manage appeal cases from people who have criminal convictions but who still want to continue with octopush — for example, those with motoring offences.

The idea is to make the process as transparent as possible.

But perverts watch out: you can run, but you can't hide.

Log on...

The Association is continuing its commitment to better informing players and clubs with a professional, bright, new website, developed by vice-chairman Steve Prince — as he explains



IT'S FINALLY happened. The Boa has its own, permanent, official website. You can find it at www.gbuwh.co.uk.

The idea is to provide a complimentary service to the existing, unofficial, websites and the e-group, and also to be a one stop shop for UK underwater hockey.

One click of your mouse button gives access to news articles, announcements, thenational squads, committee information, local club contacts, the Boa shop, Octopush News, and background information about the sport, including the rules.

There is still some work to be done to include pages for recent results for both official and unofficial tournaments.

I also want to see a page dedicated to underwater hockey images, and an archive section that can be used to store information on the history of the sport in the UK.

The Boa needs your help to get the most out of the website.

Send in your announcements about forthcoming tournaments and training sessions for the calendar.

The images section needs contributions, too.

Would you like to see other information included?

If so, let me know.

EDITORIAL

I would also appreciate it if you could mention the site on your official Boa email signature, and ask others to link to our site.

And keep an eye on the editorial content.

Do send me an email if you spot an error.

No one's perfect!

Extract the corporate digit if you love your sport

I GET USED to people whinging about the Boa. But it still makes my blood boil.

"Why do we pay our subs?" or "What does the Boa do for us?" are questions which frequently come my way.

Let me answer that cliché by paraphrasing President Kennedy: ask not what the sport does for you. Ask what *you* do for our sport.

Every octopush player in the UK is the Boa. It is a highly democratic organisation. And the association works for you whether you bother to notice or not.

Consider this: the committee is made up of players from various backgrounds who want the sport to work. They are willing to devote their best efforts to helping YOU.

Editor's Talk—Talk: Alun Mitchell

That's why it's amazing that some people in the past have mounted sometimes vitriolic and frequently ill-considered criticism of colleagues who put their own time and money to benefit the sport — and the other players.

I welcome constructive criticism. That's democracy. But, frankly, if you feel strongly about an issue — do something

Put yourself forward for a committee post. Or become a regional representative.

I can already hear those same people who whinge rehearsing their other, equally tired,

arguments. "I don't have the time."

"I work too much."

"My family demands my full attention."

"I train all my spare time."

"I can't afford it."

"What's the point?"

This is as disingenuous as it is nauseating.

All the committee are working or running their own businesses. They are devoted to their families. They also support their local clubs.

The difference is that they are willing to put themselves out and put the extra effort in to make the sport better.

Not JUST for themselves... but for everyone involved with underwater hockey.

So it's time for people to back their words with effort.

Stop shouting from the sidelines and exercising power without responsibility.

The sport can only go forward if you — the membership — steer it in the right direction.

That means you. For, truly, YOU are the Boa.

And you can start by writing a letter to Octopush News, whether or not you agree with my arguments.

We'll publish a cross sections of opinions on the subject.

I can also put you in touch with the right people if you want to go onto the committee or become a regional rep.

Those people who stay in the boat without rowing will be guilty of helping to choke our wonderful sport.

And that would be something to complain about.

Write on...

Got something to say? Let the rest of the underwater hockey world know with a letter to the editor of Octopush News. Send contributions to the address on the back page



Thankfull in the hillside

From Jenny Griffiths

Newport and Welsh Ladies

I WANT TO thank Fiona Buttrey, who is standing down as Boa secretary, for her contribution to octopush.

Fi has been a constant encouragement to me and to all the other ladies in Wales for a number of years.

Thanks to her support and commitment, the Welsh ladies has become capable of competing in tournaments such as the home internationals.

One day we may even leave the bottom of the table!

I know that the rest of the octopush community will join me in praising her commitment to her role as BOA secretary, too.

We know that she is destined to excel in her forthcoming business masters.

Under new management

From Georgina Ashley

BOA Shop Manager

boa_shop@hotmail.com

I DO APPRECIATE those who have supported and helped me to take over the BOA Shop — especially my predecessor, Zoë Dunkinson, for making it a fairly painless operation!

Ordering from the shop is easy. Just drop me an e-mail with your request and I will get back to you with the cost.

Here's to News All

From Mick Hyde

Rochdale

CONGRATULATIONS on the improved Octopush News. Let's ensure that everyone playing our sport gets to see it.

Get bug blasting now

MOST octopush players have probably had a sore throat or an upset tummy after playing hockey.

The nasty illness can last for several days.

It's probably the result of vile bugs which latch onto humans at the drop of a face mask.

So start cleaning up your act — and your kit.

Bacteria and fungi are everywhere — even in a pool environment, where the water is checked throughout the day, bugs still lurk where it is warm and humid.

equipment is cleaned regularly and stored correctly.

For example, if floats are stored flat then the water that stays between them festers and may cause tummy upsets when they are put back into the water.

This bug is the same one that makes your kitchen dishcloth smell!

Your mask and snorkel suffer this same environment each week and you may be exposing yourself to these little nasty critters every time you put on your octopush kit.

Not only is it possible to get a tummy upset from bugs like this one, but fungi like this fetid

environment too and you could get a sore throat from breathing in its spores if it happens to take up residence in your snorkel.

Take these steps to dramatically reduce the likelihood of infection.

GET a new mesh bag — and keep it in an airy place, not your car boot.

REMOVE your mask and snorkel from your kit bag (along with your trunks and towel) as soon as you get home from a session.

RINSE your mask and snorkel in fresh water and allow it to dry.

CLEAN that kit in a mild

bleach solution, then rinse and dry it.

Don't lose too much sleep over these bugs. Adopt the above measures for a few weeks and you should notice a real difference.

That early morning “gravel throat” attack should disappear — along with the upset stomach.

You might also find work more palatable the next day. Or maybe not...

SARAH LISCOE

Director of Coaching

GB TEAMS UNITE

BRITAIN'S chief referee, Neil Dixon, is taking a well-earned break after organising the European Championships in the Italian principality of San Marino.

He was originally invited to co-ordinate the referees, but the authorities then asked him to take over as tournament director — in overall charge of the event.

"I didn't get a swim for the first few days of the tournament because I was too busy with paperwork.

"This included organising more than 100 buckets of quick drying concrete to make up a mix to build crowd control barriers for the event.

"The high-tech electronic score board went on the blink for four days. We

improvised with low-tech cardboard cutouts, instead.

"And... the personal computers also went belly up on the opening day of the championships.

"Yes, I was a bit of a headless chicken at one point. But all the sides were very supportive, and the Italian hosts were most grateful for my input, so it was all worth it."

That happy atmosphere was not lost on the GB teams, who co-operated with each other in a sporting manner, actively supporting whichever side was in the pool, and offering practical help with problems such as broken mask straps.

UK squads manager Perry Rich says: "The increased co-operation made a great deal of sense.

ELITE

"It improved morale, and made the event more enjoyable and just fun. We'll build on this as we prepare for the World Championships next year."

The Elite Men maintained their position as third in Europe, behind the French winners and the Dutch runner-ups.

The Elite Women faced a dramatic play off with France to get into the final.

GB were one-nil up until the dying minutes of the game, when their continental neighbours managed to equalise.

GRASP

The French got a decisive goal in extra time and the British hopes were dashed.

John Bull's best were forced into fourth place while their opponents went on to become the overall runners-up, behind the tournament winners, Holland.

One Boa official says: "Many of the team members found representing their country a heavy burden.

"We just advised them to get into the pool and enjoy their game. This approach certainly made a big difference."

Juniors

FARNHAM and Guildford's under 16s team scooped the national championships at Manchester Aquatic Centre in March.

Tournament organiser Chris Careless says: "Congratulations to the Guildford Gremlins for regaining their position at the top after being deposed last year by Rochdale."

FINAL ORDER (Movers)

- 1 Guildford ↑ 1 place
- 2 Rochdale ↓ 1 place
- 3 Orkney V
- 4 Inverness ↑ 3 places
- 5 Sheffield
- 6 Huddersfield ↓ 2 places
- 7 Dawlish ↑ 1 place
- 8 Dunstable ↑ 1 place
- 9 Tarot ↓ 3 places
- 10 Thames Valley
- 11 Orkney III ↑ 1 place
- 12 Orkney II ↓ 1 place
- 13 Plymouth ↑ 1 place
- 14 Newcastle ↓ 1 place
- 15 Stoke

SLOWHAND SHEEHY STEALS SHOW

READING proved a class act as they grabbed the National Final at Crystal Palace.

They outplayed their rivals with style and panache — including some teams who tried to drag them down with aggressive and unsportsmanlike behaviour.

But the Thames Valley's finest kept their composure, with slick play even in the face of provocation which challenged the referees to play the advantage rule.

Vincent Sheehy in particular shone with a gentle flick to goal in the last game that was so slight that it appeared to be telekinetic.

Words cannot do justice to the move but it was truly inspirational, and a great way

to end the season.

Reading Ladies did not manage such a commanding dominance of their league, but did provide drama when their game against Spectrum Angels of Guildford went to a golden goal for the runner-up spot.

International referee Chris Careless says: "In general, the standard of play and sportsmanship in national events has improved a great deal.

"The results of the plate final were very close. Despite the pressure, the players were on their best behaviour during the games."

A television crew from Transworld Sports was on hand to capture the action, and their shots are beaming UK hockey's success story to millions of people around the world.

The ample sunshine provided a light sheen to the water, which was clean and clear — a big improvement from the Semi-Finals.

A pioneering sounding system in the middle pool proved popular.

Referees used a handheld remote control device in the water — instantly signalling a stoppage through the main buzzer on the side of the pool.

Outgoing Competitions Manager Michele Kwok says: "It was definitely a hit, both with the teams and the officials.

"We also tested out a new buzzer designed by Reading."

She adds: "Thanks to everyone who supported and participated in the competitions I have run over the last two years.

"The experience was thoroughly challenging, enjoyable and rewarding."

National Final

- 1st Reading
- 2nd Southport
- 3rd Southsea
- 4th West Wickham
- 5th Midlands A
- 6th Dewsbury

National Plate Final

- 1st Leeds Beavers
- 2nd Slough
- 3rd St Albans
- 4th Totnes
- 5th (Joint place) Putney and Edinburgh

National Ladies Final

- 1st Southwest Ladies
- 2nd Spectrum Angels
- 3rd Reading Ladies
- 4th Wahine Warriors
- 5th Yorkshire Ladies
- 6th Orkney Ladies

Picture Gallery

Oi'll drink to that, m'dears!

A DEVON team got the drinks in after an octopush tournament in Manchester. Kingsbridge's mixed side didn't bear any grudges after failing to bring away a trophy. "We only entered for a laugh." Pic: Phil Thompson



FLOATING AN IDEA



Farnham and Guildford used their "barbi-push" open air sessions at Guildford Lido to rehearse innovative tactics for their forthcoming Islington grudge match.

TANYA BACKS UK SQUAD

FREEDIVE world record holder Tanya Streeter is backing UK Octopush by giving advice on breath-holding techniques.

She has agreed to give a master class to the Ladies' Elite squad on the weekend of November 8/9.

A venue for the visit is still being worked out by GB player Mandy McPhail.

She says: "This is a real coup for UK octopush. Tanya will be showing us how she broke breath holding records."

More details from Mandy: jacaranda_mac@hotmail.com

BREATHTAKING: Tanya Streeter in action (above) and relaxing (below)



Briefly...

SHOPPING: The Boa shop has just taken in a new stock of gloves and pushers. Profits go to the National Squads. Details: boa_shop@hotmail.com



WORLDS: Organisers of the Christchurch Championships have published the competition's logo (above).

RELOCATION: Guest players are welcome at Slough Octopush club's sessions on Sundays at Ealing's Gurnell Leisure Centre at 15.30. Fee: £5. The club relocated after Slough Council closed the Centre Pool. Web: <http://freespace.virgin.net/douglas.greenwood/octopush/index.htm>

JUNIORS: An under-19 development session is being held at Churchill's Pool, South Bristol, on Sunday October 12. Details from madsisters@octopush.fsnet.co.uk

TOURNAMENT: A record number of teams are entering the fourth Ladies' Home International tournament, held at the Basingstoke Aquadrome on Sunday December 6. Send refereeing offers to alun.mitchell@ntlworld.com

EVENTS: Octopush News wants a jpeg picture and 250 words (in English, with conventional grammar) about your club's news event. You can't be in it if you don't enter into it...