

BRISTOL CENTRAL MEN'S WATER POLO

REACH FINALS OF BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIPS

After an absence of 3 years, Central reached the finals weekend in Manchester which take place on Saturday 20th & Sunday 21st February. The Preliminary round consisted of 2 groups of 4 teams playing a round robin system with the top 2 teams in each group qualifying.

The team did it the hard way though, with hard fought victories over local rivals **Cheltenham, 16 – 15** and Scottish outfit **Portobello, 13 – 11**.

The first game on Saturday was Cheltenham and with a 2 -1 winning record against them in '09, Central were marginal favourites.

A slow 1st Qtr start saw **Cheltenham** jump to a 4 -1 lead until goals from Craig Figes and Matt Thresher cut the deficit to 4 – 3.

Central started to impose their tough pressing defence but simple errors allowed Cheltenham to keep pace in goal scoring. At halftime they were still ahead 8 -7.

After halftime, Central once again allowed their opponents to take a 2 goal lead, but goals from Figes , Thresher, Jez Sherman & Brad Poole saw it level at 11 -11 at the end of the 3rd.

Central started to move up a gear and went to 14 – 11 lead early in the 4th Qtr and took control of the game. 14 -11 went to 16 - 12 inside 2 minutes and the game was won. Only sloppy defence in the final minute allowing 2 goals made the score closer.

It was a good start without Central playing anywhere near their best to win **16 – 15**.

Portobello's strength lies in their experience and not fitness and they really struggled with the pace of the game in the 1st Qtr. But they made their experience count and scored some clever goals to stay in touch and only be 4 – 3 down. **Central** went up a gear in the 2nd & went out to 8 – 4 lead with at least 3 counter attack goals which emphasised the difference in fitness. After halftime, Central then completely switched off and allowed Portobello back into the game and early in the fourth Qtr the score was level at 10 – 10. Cue a time – out and stiff talking to by Coach Rhys Tamlyn and Central scored 3 goals from Thresher (2) & Captain John Sissons. A sloppy goal conceded right at the death made the **final score 13 – 11**.

Both games saw Central's G.B. Captain Craig Figes score 6 goals.

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On Sunday morning Central played Lancaster, with both teams having already qualified. A poor start and a few experimental tactics saw Central reach the end of the 1st Qtr 6 – 1 down. The remainder of the game was much closer and Central outplayed Lancaster for long periods. 4 goals by Dan Williams were a highlight but Lancaster ran out winners 17 – 10.

Central will now play the other group winners **Manchester** on **Saturday 20th February** in the 2nd semi-final at **2.15pm**. The first semi-final between Rotherham & Lancaster starts at 1pm. The 3rd place play off will take place on Sunday 21st at 12.30 with the final at 1.45pm. All games at the **Manchester Aquatics Centre**.

Bristol Central Team **Goals**

1. Andy Crawford	
2. John Sissons	2
3. Greg Harper	1
4. Lewis Matthews	3
5. Craig Figes	13
6. Richard Manion	
7. Dan Williams	6
8. Matthew Thresher	7
9. Brad Poole	2
10. Sean Coles	1
11. Jez Sherman	2
12. Stuart Fennell	
13. Matt Holland	G/K