



WINNING WATER POLO TEAM AT MANCHESTER FESTIVAL



Pictured are the team of captain Malachi Byrne on the side with Thomas Wildman, James Pennington, Peter Barnard, George Garnett, Jamie Foster Grime, William Wedgewood, Andres Reyes Tascon and Ehi Itua.

St. Ambrose College under-12s have won the prestigious Manchester Water Polo Festival, an invitational event for the nation's top aquatic clubs and sports schools.

The title amounts to the national championships and sees Ambrose at the top of the national rankings only four years after introducing water polo as a main stream sport.

Since opening their new pool in 2012 interest has grown exponentially in aquatic sports at the top Hale Barns Catholic grammar school and now 40 boys in the under-12 squad compete for places in the seven man team, with six subs.

The St. Ambrose lads combined both skill and stunning levels of endurance to maintain form in what is a physically gruelling event for the six hours of competition.

In the round robin they beat Rotherham 8 – 3; Chester 7 – 2 with a 3 – 3 draw against Tydesley. In the quarter final they then cruised past Sedgefield 7 – 3 before beating Bridgefield 7 – 2 in the semis, again facing arch rivals Tydesley in a thrilling final which sorted out the men from the boys.

Tydesley took an early lead scoring and though Ambrose piled on the pressure it was only in the last minute that clinical finisher Jamie Forster Grime drilled home for a stunning equaliser, setting up an agonising penalty shoot out.

Captain and keeper Malachi Byrne proved unbeatable, with Ambrose winning courtesy of a cool clinical finish from Andres Reyes who gave their keeper the eyes before sending him the wrong way to cue the celebrations.

St. Ambrose College Swimming and Water Polo Coach Paula Chandler said: "Water polo builds incredible strength, flexibility and endurance and is a wonderful team sport for our young men. It was a thrilling day of competition and a great joy to see Malachi deservedly lift this blue ribbon cup."