

## North West u15 League Tournament 1 - 9 December 2006, Garston

<b>Deva Lads</b>	<b>16 v 4</b>	<b>Deva Divas</b>	<b>(10:2)</b>
C. Turner	6	J. Guest	2
M. Jans	5	J. Alderson	1
B. Shepherd	3	J. Szczyglowska	1

<b>Deva Divas</b>	<b>10 v 18</b>	<b>Speke Garston</b>	<b>(2:8)</b>
J. Guest	4	M. Dutton	9
J. Alderson	4	I. McMullen	4
D. Alderson	1	J. McInally	2
J. Szczyglowska	1	M. Blake	1
		M. Handley	1
		D. Jacques	1

<b>Deva Lads</b>	<b>10 v 12</b>	<b>Mersey</b>	<b>(6:8)</b>
M. Jans	4	M. Cook	9
C. Turner	2	K. Robinson	2
T. Howard	2	A. Price	1
S. White	2		

<b>Speke Garston</b>	<b>11 v 15</b>	<b>Deva Lads</b>	<b>(8:10)</b>
J. McInally	3	T. Howard	3
M. Dutton	3	M. Jans	3
M. Handley	3	C. Turner	3
I. McMullen	2	S. White	2
		Chris	2

<b>Deva Divas</b>	<b>15 v 17</b>	<b>Mersey</b>	<b>(5:11)</b>
J. Guest	6	A. Price	7
J. Alderson	6	M. Cook	6
J. Milligan	1	K. Robinson	3
D. Alderson	1	C. Murray	1
J. Szczyglowska	1		

<b>Mersey</b>	<b>15 v 9</b>	<b>Speke Garston</b>	
M. Cook	9	J. McInally	4
A. Price	3	M. Hindley	2
J. Dwyer	2	M. Dutton	2
K. Robinson	1	D. Jacques	1

## Current Tables

Division 1	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Mersey	3	3	0	0	44	34	+10	9
Deva Lads	3	2	0	1	41	27	+14	7
Speke Garston	3	1	0	2	38	40	-2	5
Deva Divas	3	0	0	3	29	51	-22	3

## New kids on the block.

The North-West's newest team, 'Mersey Handball' entered the under 15 league at Speke Garston on Saturday. Drawn from the Cheshire side of the river, the team consisted of novice players from Halton, taking their first steps into competitive handball, bolstered by former Wirral players bringing in much needed match experience.

The day started with the two Deva HC teams meeting each other. Deva coach Jon Kelly had opted not to play mixed teams and to separate his teams into an all girl and all lads squad. As this is the age group where the size and strength differences start to make a big difference, it was always going to be a tough day for the girls. It proved so, as the Deva lads ran out 16-4 winners. The girls then had to come out straight away for a 'back to back' game with Speke Garston. Speke opened up fast, with Michael Dutton's powerful shooting taking the home team to an 8-2 lead at the interval, but the girls rallied second half, going goal for goal for a period, and the final scoreline was a much more respectable 18-10.

Time for the new boys to enter the fray, and it could not have been a more daunting opponent for their first competitive match, with Deva being the strongest team in the UK at this age group. Mersey opened up a two goal lead, as Matthew Cook finished two surging runs from half with powerful and accurate shots, giving Saul Chambers in the Deva goal little chance. Deva replied through Jans and Turner, but further goals from Cook and Robinson meant that Mersey retained their two goal lead to the interval to go in 8-6 ahead. Both teams tightened their defences in the second half, as Deva coach Kelly opted for a 4-0-2 defence trying to neutralise the threat from Mersey's two more experienced players, while the Mersey coach opted for a 6-0 defence to counter Deva's all round threat. In a much tighter second half, Mersey held their nerve, and their lead, finishing the game 12-10 winners.

The Deva lads were then also obliged to come out again for a back to back game with Speke. They showed good fitness, and held a narrow lead throughout, with three goals each from goals Jans, Howard and Turner for Deva, being countered by three strikes each from McInally, Dutton and Handley for Speke. Deva were able to relax a little more in the second half

though, and went from 10-8 lead at half time to a more comfortable 15-11 by the close.

Mersey now faced the Deva girls, and the Mersey lads raced out in front, to lead 8-1 after 10 minutes, but the withdrawal of Cook for Mersey at this stage saw the girls show great character to claw their way back into the game. As Jade Alderson and Jody Guest found their shooting boots, only Robinson in the Mersey defence had the experience and height to counter Guest's 9 metre shooting, and by half time they had closed the deficit to 11-5. Spurred on by their own comeback and a vociferous crowd, the girls started the second half by chipping away at the lead as Mersey struggled to find the net, until the girls stole into the lead, holding a 15-13 advantage with four minutes to go. The return of Cook at this point turned the game, as Mersey surged forward the Deva girls tried to hang on, but a flurry of goals from Cook, Robinson and Adam Price left Mersey as 17-15 winners.

The final game of the day saw Mersey return for their back to back game with Speke. After the excitement of the previous game, Mersey took an early lead and tightened up their defence to make sure they weren't pressed so hard in this game. A solid 6-0 defensive line kept all but one of Speke's shots at bay in the opening period, while goals from Price, Cook and Robinson ensured Mersey retained control of the game. In the second half one of the youngest players in the tournament, right-wing Jordan Dwyer capped off a fine performance by intercepting a pass on his own 9 metre line and sprinting the length of the court to lash an unstoppable shot to the top corner. Mersey finished 15-9 victors.

Top scorer for the day was Matty Cook, in awesome form for Mersey, with an impressive 24 goals, despite missing most of one game. Michael Dutton for Speke showed his future potential with 14 goals launched from his 'rocket' right arm. Devas' goals were spread more, with 12 from Jans and 11 from Turner, but they will look to the next tournament when returning players will again make them odds-on favourites for the title. 11 goals from Mersey's Price making his debut in competitive handball mark him down as another 'one to watch'. Jody Guest top scored for the girls, with 12 goals, with 11 from Jade Alderson but more importantly the girls commitment and determination in an unequal struggle augers well for the future.