

Gloucestershire Media Sports Awards: We're clubbing together



James Howse

THE three finalists for the [Junior Club of the Year](#) award in our Sports Awards all share something in common.

It's not the sport – archery, swimming and tennis are all very different.

But what unites Deer Park Archers, [Gloucester City Swimming Club](#) and [Oxstalls Tennis Centre](#) is a passionate commitment to young people.

All three clubs give young sports people opportunities to excel and learn in a safe and supportive environment.

Deer Park Archers have 200 members and 120 of them are junior members.

Adults and young people train and compete together during regular club meetings in the county, under strict safety supervision.

Coach Stephanie Crang, 22, said: "Archery is great for young people who are not that sporty or who are semi-sporty.

"It gives them great opportunities to compete locally, regionally and nationally."

Crang herself has competed at national and international level, achieving a team silver at the Commonwealth Championships and a British Under-18 championship title.

Another star of the club is 11-year-old [James Howse](#) from Shurdington.

He is British indoor and outdoor champion for under-12s, and he got both of the titles when he was ten. He also has a number of regional and county titles and six county records.

Howse, who is aiming for Commonwealth Games glory in years to come, said: "The coaches are extremely good here and give us lots of support to help us succeed.

"Stephanie has achieved so much herself so it's great to learn from her."

He said a good archer needs to have physical and mental strength and good concentration.

The archery club impressed the judges because of their involvement in the Sports Unlimited programme, which seeks to give young people taster sessions in sports and the supports them if they want to pursue the activity.

Gloucester City Swimming Club, based at [GL1 Leisure Centre](#) in Gloucester, takes its role in providing expert coaching to young swimmers extremely seriously – it has sent 46 young people out to [Malaga](#) in [Spain](#) for some winter training this week.

Treasurer [Paul Robinson](#) said: "We have gone out to a 50m pool in Spain to get some metres in for our winter training.

"The children, aged from ten to 18, are doing 13,000 metres every day for six days.

"They need to do their season's training at this time of year, working towards the nationals in July."

The children out in Spain are benefiting from tuition from three top coaches, [Graham Brookhouse](#), [Andy Osborne](#) and [Jane Seymour](#).

The trio are really putting the young swimmers through their paces – the children are up at 6am ready for a 7am start in the pool.

Robinson, from Quedgeley, said it was a real honour for the club to be nominated for a Sports Award – especially as the club is celebrating its centenary year.

The Gloucestershire Media judges were particularly impressed with the impressive medal haul the club has achieved.

Our third finalist, Oxstalls Tennis Club, is hosting another one of its junior tournaments this week.

As well as providing expert coaching to 382 junior members, the tennis centre in Gloucester is a venue for tournaments throughout the year.

[Helen Stevens](#), tennis development officer with Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust, said: "We are hosting a grade three [Lawn Tennis Association](#) tournament here, with players aged from under-eights to under-18s from across the country.

"One of our club players [Ella Mora](#), 12, from Gloucester, is playing in the under-14s.

"She is in the top 50 of under-12 players in the country."

Another young star from the club is [Sam Tullett](#), who won the right to play at Wimbledon in the under-14s Road to Wimbledon contest.

As well as working with individual young tennis players, the club also reaches out to schools across the county.

It provided taster sessions to 1,500 children at 37 primary schools to introduce children to the sport.

Stevens said: "We are so honoured to be finalists in the Sports Awards.

"It will help to put tennis on the map and highlight all the work that goes on in clubs and schools across the county."

The club really stood out during the judging process for the amount of work done throughout the county to get children, able-bodied and disabled, passionate about the sport.

All the finalists will be invited to a special gala presentation dinner at [Cheltenham Racecourse](#) on Wednesday, November 24.

To book your place visit www.thisisgloucestershire.co.uk/sportsawards for more information.

All the finalists will be profiled in the *Gloucestershire Echo* in the next fortnight.