

2010 Yazoo National Youth Hockey Festival –

Umpire Challenge, reflections from the event from Jamie Hooper.

- This year's EHB National Challenge was hosted at Beeston HC, and saw the top two U12 boys and girls club teams from every region in England flood to Highfields to play it out for the National title. As well as each region providing teams, the North, South, East, West and Midlands's regional action groups provided all of the 25 umpires for the tournament. Due to the need for reserves the Midlands provided the most (8). With a real mix of ages and experiences it was going to be a great weekend for all, with a lot for everyone to learn.

After a great team building evening on the Friday, co-ordinated by the EHB Youth Panel, we all quickly got to know one another in preparation for working closely with each other over the rest of the weekend. On the Saturday, we umpired the U9's Champions Festival, this year with each team being linked with a World Cup team. This was a great way to break the ice and allow us to get to know each other a little more and settle into the weekend. Sunday saw the umpiring team take on the U12 National finals, with City of York girls and Canterbury boys eventually emerging as the overall National champions. The day saw a fantastic standard of hockey all round, and provided some excellent games for the umpiring team to take on. After the final games, the umpires met for their final debriefs and medal and certificate presentation. After the presentation, one final award was presented; the EHB Young Umpire Challenge trophy for 2010, which all the umpires had voted on who they thought was the most outstanding umpire of the weekend, both on and off the pitch, and deserved of the title. This year, I was surprised most humbly accepted the title and the awarded trophy, and even more so happy to bring it back to the Midlands as a new member of the MRYUAG family.

(Photo - Jamie receiving his award from Nick Bennett, the 2009 NYHF Young Umpire of the Year).

A massive thank you must go out to all of the umpire coaches for all their help over the weekend, and particularly to our two umpire managers, Bruce Bale and Marc Abraham. I think it is safe to say that all of the umpires got a huge amount out of the weekend with the fantastic coaching provided. Most of all however, it must be said that the award is even more special because it was voted for by my fellow umpires, so finally I would like to say a HUGE thank you to all of the umpire team for providing me with an amazing weekend, and the title of the EHB Young Challenge Umpire of the Year for 2010.



Jamie Hooper