

Pearl powers his way to second in standings



■ Gem of a showing — from Southend's George Pearl (left)

SOUTHEND Wheelers' 16-year-old junior category rider George Pearl certainly came out of his shell to produce a gem of a performance in the second of this season's Hogg Hill winter series for third and fourth category cyclists at the Redbridge Centre.

For, despite lining up against the grittiest adult men, the St Thomas More School, Westcliff, student, produced a thrilling fourth place.

It moves him up to second place in the series and was a superb showing on a tough circuit which, on this occasion, was ridden in poor weather conditions.

The biting cold wind was head-on for large sections of the circuit, buffeting the riders at each turn.

CYCLING

By DICK MARSHALL

dick.marshall@nqe.com

Rain which had fallen right up to the start caused a freezing dirty spray to be thrown up from the wheels of the leading riders into the faces of those behind.

Pearl consolidated on a superb ride the previous week with a performance that displayed both mental and physical strength that surprised even his coach.

After the first few laps a leading bunch of eight riders eased clear of the field.

Almost immediately, the front men picked up the pace and split the group further.

A gap was created between the first four and following three.

The Southend teenager drove the chasing group on and could soon see that the leading group had been reduced to three with the fourth-placed rider left in no-man's land, stranded between two groups of three.

Pearl seized his chance and, urging the other two riders on, gradually made ground on fourth place.

Sensing the impending catch, the fourth-placed rider eased back in preparation for a bid to stay with his capturers.

Four laps out Pearl led the trio in an uphill charge and bore down on his prey, dropping one of the trio in the process.

A new bunch of three was formed sharing the work for the next lap. With the three front men well away by now, fourth place

was there for the taking by one of Pearl's group.

Next time round the seaside gambled everything — risking running out of energy and blowing up — by attacking hard up the hill.

This created a gap and separated the two other riders. The closest of the two gave chase and Pearly had to keep his effort high just to stay aye.

Two further charges up the hill in each of the final two laps were enough to keep the distance and Pearl rounded the last bend free and clear, crossing the line too tired to celebrate although he did manage a smile at his fourth placing.

His smile widened later when he learned of his second overall standing.