Teen becomes youngest victor

By Brad Forrest

AGED just 14, Jesse Goodyear became the youngest swimmer to win the 2.3 kilometre Payce Cronulla Shark Island Swim at Cronulla beach on Sunday.

Part of the strong Sans Souci club squad trained by former Olympian Craig Stevens, he beat 452 fellow competitors in 28 minutes, 24 seconds and won $1000 in prizemoney.

And fellow Sans Souci clubmate Taylar Puscaric, also a champion surf swimmer with Wanda SLSC, won the women's division for the fourth consecutive year.

Heat in perfect weather conditions, a total of 709 swimmers took to both the main race, started by Sutherland Shire mayor Steve Simpson, and the earlier 1 kilometre swim.

Jesse of Barden Ridge came from behind in the close and exciting swim back from the cans to topple Cronulla's "mighty-mouse" Mark Simpson (28.43), with Elouera's Jake Little a close third.

"That was the best result of my life," said Jesse, who will now tackle the Australia Age (stillwater) titles in a few weeks.

Puscaric, 18, of Kogarah Bay has an even busier time: "I'm off to Perth to compete in the Australian Surf Life Saving Championships for Wanda before flying back to contest the national age stillwater titles," she said. "I'll be competing in the 100 metre and 200 metre butterfly and the relays."

Puscaric again outswam most of the male competitors by finishing fifth outright, with Emma Southwell of Engadine and Cody Parsons of Caringbah taking second and third in the women's division behind her.

Georgene McKenzie-Hicks, at 86 the Shark Island event's oldest competitor and a regular racer, beat home nearly 40 of her younger competitors with a time of 58.48, while the Billy Stafford Award for swimmers over 70 years was won by former state and federal minister, Bruce Baird, who recorded a respectable time of 42.14 minutes.

The one-kilometre Payce Fun Swim attracted 256 starters and was won by Jed Boxall, with the first female competitor, Samantha Kennedy, finishing 12th.

Brian Boyd, managing director of new sponsor Payce, announced his company had committed to major sponsorship of the event for the next five years.

Go to sharkislandswim.au for a full list of competitors, their times and placings.