

## Welcome to the City of St Albans Swimming Club!

### Parents/Guardians Handbook

This handbook is aimed primarily at helping people who are new to swimming clubs get through their first few years with at least some sense of what's going on around them; although people joining from other clubs may also find it useful to explain some of those little quirks that every organisation develops over the years.

This document will help you identify

- what you don't need to worry about - because it will be done for you
- what you do need to look out for - because you may have to do something about it

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## 1. Introduction

You've filled in the club registration form, written your fee cheque, found your way around the Club Website. The last thing you might need is something else to look at.

However pretty soon you'll find emails appearing in your inbox announcing various events and reminding you to do things about which you have no knowledge; the club notice board will be overflowing with indecipherable bits of paper in which everyone else is intensely interested; and everywhere you go it will seem as though everyone is talking knowledgeably about everything – except you!

**Don't worry; we've all been there!**

If you simply can't manage any more at the moment then do just try to get to the end of the next page which gives you a summary and tells you how we communicate with you. That said, we really do recommend that you try to read or at least skim the rest when you get the chance, otherwise you'll never know what you might be missing!

One thing we would ask is that you appreciate what a complex beast a swimming club is. CoStA/St Albans Masters swimming clubs have around 360 swimmers aged from 6 upwards, we run at least one training session 6 days a week, 48 weeks a year, and organise or participate in many competitive events throughout the year; with very few paid members of staff. With all the best intentions in the world things go wrong from time to time, but with your help and support we can nearly always sort them out.

## 2. Summary

### Don't worry about

- Training groups
- Galas, apart from
  - Checking the notice board to see if your swimmer has been selected for a team and indicating whether they can swim or not
  - Checking the notice board to see if you have been requested to help!
- Opens (unless your swimmer is in Junior Squad or above)
- Herts County Championships & Regional Championships (unless your swimmer is in Junior Squad or above)

### Look out for

- Time Trials - various times throughout year – details will be on the club notice-boards
- The John Hempenstall Memorial Gala for under 10's
- The Club Championships – Sprint Meet - everyone (usually held in January)
- The Club Championships – everyone (April and June)
- CoStA Aquathlon – everyone (April or May). This is the Club's main 'outside' fund raiser so do encourage your friends to join you at this meet.

### And how do you find out about any of this?

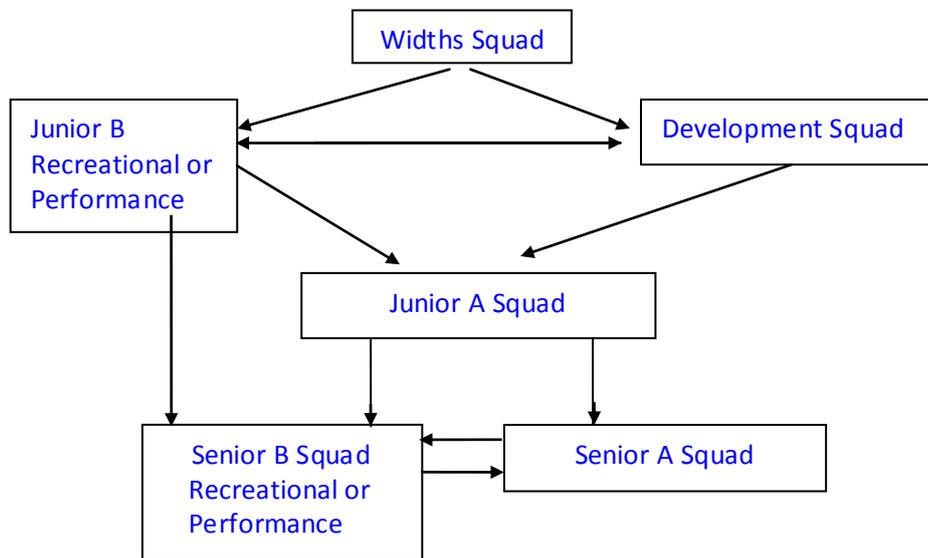
- look at the notice board and website on a regular basis
- read your emails/post and respond or act in a timely basis
- let us know if any of your contact details change
- talk to everyone you can

### and last but by no means least

- GET INVOLVED – it really is much more interesting if you do!

### 3. Training groups

The good thing about training groups is that **you don't need to do anything!** On joining the club a swimmer is allocated to a training group. In ascending order, these are



- Widths Squad
- Development Squad
- Junior A Squad or Junior B Squad
- Senior A Squad or Senior B Squad

When your swimmer is assessed as having reached a certain level they will be moved to the next group. Group moves within the Widths, Development and Junior Squads are largely based on continuous assessment; there are no formal exams or tests to be passed. Group moves from Development Squad onwards are increasingly based on a swimmer's ability to swim certain distances in an acceptable time and commitment to training. The current commitment for these groups is as set out below:-

- Development Squad – 2 to 3 sessions a week. In preparation for a move to the Junior A squad
- Junior A Squad – minimum of 3 sessions a week or a County Qualifying Time
- Senior A Squad – minimum of 4 sessions a week or a County Qualifying Time

There are no pre-determined dates when moves take place. **We will tell you when swimmers have been moved, what the new training times are (and whether your fees will change).**

As you sit in the gallery wondering what is going on, you might find it easier to think along the following lines:

- For younger swimmers in groups up to and including the Junior Squad the focus is on technical training with a small amount of fitness and sprint work. All those funny exercises they go through are designed to get them to move different parts of their bodies in the most efficient way for different strokes, because ....
- .... when they move into the Senior Squad the amount of technical work is gradually reduced in favour of building up stamina. When you watch them go through their first 32 length warm-up session in the 25m pool you realise why so much time is spent getting the strokes right; poor technique at this stage will be exposed very quickly, brute strength will only get them so far!

Coaches might flinch at these sweeping generalisations, and in no way are they supposed to trivialise all the effort and skill that goes into devising and implementing interesting training schedules. But it should be sufficient to give you some sort of framework to what is going on. If you want to know more about the theory then be warned – you might be coach material!

**In summary, the only thing you need to do for regular training is to make certain that the swimmer turns up at the right pool at the right time.**

### 3.1 Coaching Staff

In the Widths, Development and Junior B Squads the aim is for swimmers to work with just one or two main coaches. However as the number of training sessions increases in the Development, Junior and Senior Squads, swimmers will regularly work with more than one coach under the overall guidance of a Lead Coach as follows:-

Head Coach - Junior & Senior A Squad Leader	Stewart Melton
Senior Coach - Widths and Junior & Senior B Development Squad Leader	Sarah Stephens Kate Chadwick

You should feel free to talk to any of the club's coaching staff if you have any questions or concerns but in general the Squad Leader should be your first point of contact. As it can be quite manic poolside during training you might want to email the appropriate Squad Coach with your query as follows:-

- Head Coach - Stewart Melton [headcoach@costaasc.org](mailto:headcoach@costaasc.org)
- Senior Coach - Sarah Stephens [seniorcoach@costaasc.org](mailto:seniorcoach@costaasc.org)
- Dev Coach – Kate Chadwick [developmentsquad@costaasc.org](mailto:developmentsquad@costaasc.org)

## 4. Competitions

Competitions are a key part of the club's activities. This is where it can seem to get complicated. But once you get started the process is quite gradual and despite what can sometimes seem like a deliberate attempt to confuse by describing competitions with as many different obscure names as possible, the formats are really quite simple and repetitive.

**The trick is to know how, when and where to get started!**

CoStA is committed to giving as many of our swimmers as possible the opportunity to compete regularly during the year, irrespective of ability. It's a good idea to get your head around what's going on as soon as possible so that it doesn't come as too much of a surprise later on, although the level of competitive activity for swimmers before they join the Development Squad is relatively limited.

To get an idea of our competitive schedule, take a look at the club events schedule on the notice board (which can also be downloaded from the website<sup>1</sup>) and read about past and future events on the website. What follows should help you put it all into context.

The first thing to get straight is that there are two types of competitions or "meets"

- team competitions, normally called "galas" where we compete as CoStA Swimming Club against other local clubs
- individual competitions, which are generally called either "Opens" or "Championships"

### 4.1 Galas

The great thing about galas for parents is that team selection is made by the coaches and posted on the notice board. If a swimmer is selected for a particular event, generally **all you need to do is to confirm availability and make certain that they get to the venue on time**; it's that easy!

Here's just a little more information that might help you understand the various competitions.

Galas take place throughout the year, normally on Saturday evenings. Competitions are normally, but not always, a mix of individual and relay events; normally no more than 25m for younger swimmers and normally segregated, boys and girls. The one time where boys and girls race together is what are called "squadron" races where representatives of each age group (and sometimes the whole team!) race in an extended relay; it's every bit as chaotic (and exciting) as it sounds!

Points are awarded for each race. Sometimes the winner receiving the smallest number of points, others the largest; it just depends on the rules of the competition.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.costaasc.org](http://www.costaasc.org)

Galas come in all shapes and sizes, they can

- be one offs, like the Hartham Bowl or Verulam Invitational galas, CoStA Christmas Gala or operate in leagues over a number of legs with promotion and relegation between divisions, such as the Peanuts League, Arena National League and Herts Major League
- be aimed at different ages of swimmers, so Peanuts is for 9-12 year olds, the Arena and the Herts Major are for 9 year olds and over
- have 1 year age bands like Peanuts or 2 year age bands like Arena and the Herts Major
- be aimed at different abilities of swimmers by stipulating that swimmers cannot be faster than a certain time (a “no faster than” time, or NFT).

**If your swimmer is selected for a gala it is a good idea to talk to the Team Manager (named on the team list) or someone who has been before to understand the format.**

You shouldn't assume anything if a swimmer is not picked for a gala team. They may be too fast for that particular event, or not fast enough, or we may need to give someone else a chance either just to compete or to compete using a stroke that they are not normally selected to swim. If you want to understand why someone hasn't been selected for a particular gala, don't guess; ask the Team Manager.

#### **4.1.1 Your first gala**

Sooner or later everyone attends their first gala. Despite all our best efforts you may have missed the team list appearing on the notice board and will have received an email or phone call to see if you are able to attend. Don't worry about it, nobody minds – at least the first time!

The team always meets changed and poolside, not at the entrance. It's your responsibility to make certain that the swimmer finds the CoStA team, which may not be easy as the competition will nearly always be at a strange pool and as a new parent/swimmer you probably won't recognise the CoStA Team Manager or any of the other swimmers. Look out for club kit bags, t-shirts and hats.

All swimmers are expected to wear a club hat at competitions. This is mainly because they're representing the club, but also because it makes them easier to identify amidst the organised chaos that is a swimming competition.

Once the swimmer has safely found the team you can relax. There will always be lots of poolside support to make certain they know what they have to do, particularly for younger and less experienced swimmers.

- The Team Manager or one of the coaches tells everyone what races they will swim in and gives feedback on performance afterwards.
- There is normally a “whip” poolside who is responsible for getting the swimmers to the right end of the lane a few races in advance. If a swimmer needs to leave the pool for whatever reason they should always check with their whip first.
- There are also normally a “lane end” representative who is responsible for making sure the swimmers know what stroke they’re swimming and how many lengths (not as silly as it sounds, even for experienced swimmers). They also help with the timing of handovers during relays, especially for younger swimmers.
- Finally there will be at least one timekeeper; and although for your first gala it’s probably too early to be worrying about it, every swimmer’s times will appear on the club website, normally within a week of the competition

All of these people are parents by the way, just like you. No-one expects you to get involved in your first gala, but you might like to bear in mind once you get used to the routine that we can only provide this level of support to everyone’s swimmers if parents are prepared to participate.

There is usually a fee for spectators to cover the cost of a programme and pool hire.

#### **4.1.2 Peanuts League**

The Peanuts League is one of the first competitive events in which many swimmers participate. It’s generally held on three Saturdays after Easter running into early summer.

The competition takes the form of individual (male and female) events for each age group (Free, Back, Fly and Breaststroke) and a Freestyle and Individual Medley (IM) relay for each group. Generally swimmers won’t be told until they arrive exactly what they will be swimming as the team will only be confirmed once sickness etc are reported and may be changed quite close to the start of the event. Swimmers can be asked to swim both individual and relay events or just relay events.

The team is selected based on times achieved in Club Champs and Time Trials so its important to take part in as many as you can.

**... if a new swimmer wants to be selected for a Peanuts team they stand a far better chance if they turn up for Club Champs and any time trials are held!**

### 4.1.3 The “John Hemenstall Memorial Gala ” – for U10s

The John Hemenstall Memorial Gala is for under 10s and is only open to those who are under 10 years old at the end of the year the Gala takes place. The coaches don't select a team because everyone under 10 can enter. This Gala is usually held at one of our smaller venues and as such is perfect for those whose first Gala this is.

Swimmers don't need to dive in if they don't want to and each event is 25m (Freestyle, Back, Breast and Back) with a 50m Freestyle and 100 IM for those who want to give those a go. It's important to get some times in the system as hopefully at your next event you will swim faster and start to see real improvements.

It's a great way to get some sense of what it feels like to swim in front of a noisy and supportive crowd. There are medals for the top six in each event and an overall prize for the top boy and girl. There will be a certificate, to say you've taken part, for every swimmer.

So look out for information on the John Hemenstall Memorial Gala for U10s and don't be confused by the use of the term “gala” into thinking that someone will tell you who has been selected! This is one for everyone to compete in if they possibly can, but ...

**... if a swimmer wants to participate in the John Hemenstall Memorial Gala they need to sign up for it.**

## 4.2 Club Championships

This is the next thing you should look out for where only members of the club participate (both CoStA and our Masters division – St Albans Masters). There are generally no time, age or ability restrictions<sup>2</sup>; the idea is that everyone should compete if at all possible.

The club championships are held in

- January – Sprint event comprising 50m for Free, Back, Breast and Fly
- April/May – comprising various distances for Breaststroke, Back and 200m IM
- June – comprising various distances for Freestyle, Butterfly and 100m IM

The Club Championship is run exactly like an Open competition. There is a routine and discipline to the way all Opens work (if you watch the Olympics it really isn't all that different) and the sooner swimmers get comfortable with that process the better they will perform at other competitions. The Club Championship is one of the friendliest ways to introduce swimmers to the way the system works.

As with the John Hemenstall Memorial Gala, no-one minds if the younger swimmers don't dive in and they're normally not expected to swim more than 25m; there is a lot

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<sup>2</sup> Some younger swimmers may be limited to shorter distance events

of (sometimes literal) hand holding to make sure that they know what to do. **Talk to the swimmer's coach to see what events they should enter.**

Heats are swum in time order, slowest first, but awards are made by age group i.e. a swimmer may race in a heat with swimmers older or younger than them because their entry times are similar. Once all the heat results are received, swimmers' success is measured against the time they achieved relative to other swimmers in their age group; this is called "heat declared winner" i.e. a swimmer might be the fastest in their age group but never actually be in the pool at the same time as their peers. If they do well, they might even get a medal!

Each swimmer is also a member of a House which currently comprise of

Augustus	– all swimmers with surname A to E
Nero	– all swimmers with a surname F to K
Maximus	- all swimmers with a surname L to P
Tiberius	– all swimmers with a surname Q to Z

The House Cup is awarded to the House with the most points gained across Club Champs.

However to stand any chance of winning that medal they need to compete, and for them to compete you have to fill in the application form and commit in advance for the events in which they want to compete. We will email you about it, post notices on the club notice board, and put the information and the application forms on the web site, but at the end of the day ...

**... you have to fill in the registration forms and return them;  
no-one else will do it for you!**

Just as with the swimmers during the event, there is a discipline to entering competitions; get used to it quickly! **Deadlines for returning application forms are serious and don't include margins for people who forget or are on holiday.** Whether it's the Club Championship or an external event; these competitions are complicated to manage and there just isn't time constantly to chase people who don't apply on time. Miss the date and it's your swimmer that will miss out.

### 4.3 County Championships

A few words about this event which takes place over two or three full weekends in March and is the first formal rung on a ladder that runs through Regionals, Nationals and ultimately ends up at the World Championships and the Olympics; which is rather humbling when you think about it!

Counties have minimum entry times but no NFT (not faster than) times. Typically swimmers will at least be in the Junior squad (minimum age 9yrs as of the date of the

Championships) before they reach the qualifying times which will be posted on the club website and notice board when available.

Whilst the longer races will operate on the “heat declared winner” basis, shorter races may have a final swim-off to determine the ultimate winner i.e. the six<sup>3</sup> fastest swimmers in an age group may race head-to-head to determine the final placing in that age group. It also gives those swimmers another opportunity to improve their times.

If a swimmer looks like they might qualify for one or more events at Counties then the preceding months can be something of a challenge as you try to piece together opportunities where they might achieve the qualifying times. We enter swimmers for a number of the open events in the early part of the year for just that purpose; details are on the event schedule.

But for the purposes of this note that’s all in the future; Counties aren’t generally an issue for new swimmers.

## 4.4 Opens

This is where it can get a bit messy. The good news is that until swimmers get to the Development or Junior Squads you don’t really need to worry about it but here’s some background if you’re interested.

In theory, “Opens” are precisely what the name says, open to anyone. However in practice the club will manage entries to a certain number of opens each year and provide poolside coaching support, so although you could go anywhere in the country for a race, at the outset at least we’d recommend that you stick with the events we select! If the club lists an open on the event schedule then we’ll submit a group entry and provide poolside coaching support.

Opens (and Championships) are generally rather longer than Galas; typically an afternoon and evening; sometimes in four sessions over a weekend; sometimes, as with the County Championships, over more than one weekend. You don’t need to attend every session if your swimmer isn’t involved in an event during a session. However, when a swimmer is involved you need to be there at the start of the session irrespective of when during the session the event is scheduled. You can leave when they’ve finished all their events (making certain of course that they haven’t qualified for a final!).

This extended format introduces a whole new level of out-of-water skills for swimmers; how to keep warm when not swimming sometimes for over an hour, how to warm up in preparation for a race, how to keep focused, what to eat. The club issues guidelines as we approach the events when new swimmers first start competing in opens; **it’s a good idea to take this advice seriously**. Packing cubes of raw jelly and the rest may look silly before you’ve experienced it, but it’s written with the benefit of a lot of experience; **take advantage of that experience**. The alternative is to hang around a pool for over two hours and then watch your swimmer perform poorly in a 50m race that’s over in less than 40 seconds because they weren’t properly prepared, and then have to repeat

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<sup>3</sup> Or eight or ten depending on the size of the pool

the whole process over another weekend somewhere else to get the elusive qualifying time they wanted. It just isn't worth it; get it right first time!

The type of race distance varies between competitions. Some focus on sprint events of 100m or less; others on middle distance events of 200m or 400m; some do everything. The only way to find out is to look at the detail.

Rather confusingly, some open meets are referred to as "A", "B" or "C" level whilst others are referred to as "ASA<sup>4</sup> level 1, 2, 3 or 4".

The letters refer to an ASA defined level of swimmer ability. There are formal ASA issued times linked to each level<sup>5</sup>, but broadly

- "AAA" grade swimmers are about national level
- "AA" grade swimmers are about district or regional qualifying times
- "A" grade swimmers are getting county qualifying times
- "B" grade are good club swimmers
- "C" is everyone else

The numbers refer to a specific category of meet as defined by the ASA.

- Level 1 - aimed at National Grade swimmers
- Level 2 - aimed at Regional Grade swimmers
- Level 3 - aimed at County Grade swimmers
- Level 4 - other swimmers

Licensed meets (until now we were referring to them as Opens) must meet certain organisational criteria such as electronic timing, officials have to be ASA qualified etc.

When you submit an entry you have to provide an entry time, typically this will have been achieved in a competition or timed by the swimmer's coach. The higher level licensed events may require times to have been achieved at a licensed event and within a specific period before the competition. Some events have various combinations of time restrictions on them. So

- The County Championships have a minimum time standard, but no "no faster than" times. From 2011 your times, which you want to use for County entry, must have been gained at a Licensed Meet.
- Some Development meets have "no faster than times"

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<sup>4</sup> The Amateur Swimming Association, the governing body of the sport in the UK. See <http://www.sportcentric.com/vsite/vtrial/page/home/0,11065,5157-179543-196761-40076-265736-custom-item,00.html> for details.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.sportcentric.com/vsite/vfile/page/fileurl/0,,5157-1-1-121400-0-file,00.pdf>

- Some Opens have both an upper and lower time constraint.

Once again, events will be swum in reverse order of entry time and awards made against performance in age category. The extent to which awards are determined by heat declared winner or a final swim off will vary between opens.

As there is a lot of demand for places at Opens (lots of swimmers out there are looking for qualifying times, especially towards the end of the year) it is really important to get your entry in as soon as possible and in advance of any closing date. Our Fixture Secretary usually sends our entries off in batches as soon as they are received. This helps us get places at events which will usually fill up well in advance of the closing date given.

## 5. Personal best and competition entry times

### 5.1 Personal best times

It's very difficult to talk about swimming without sooner or later talking about personal best times, or "PB's".

In the early stages of the club PB's are by no means the only determinant of progress; serious account is also taken of technical skills and general attitude toward training. But as a swimmer moves through the club the focus is increasingly on just how fast they can swim a particular stroke over a particular distance. PB's also feature strongly in team selection, the ability to enter certain competitions, and where in a competition a swimmer will compete.

Results from all meets are displayed on the club notice boards so you can keep a record of your swimmers times but ask one of the coaches if you need further information.

Technically PB's can only be registered in an individual event or where the swimmer swims the lead or first leg of a relay. Non-lead legs of relay races don't constitute PB's because reaction times when you can see a swimmer coming toward you can be over a second faster than when you're waiting for the starter. However times from non-lead legs can be useful for you to see your progress so they're all recorded in the system.

You can access your swimmers current PB times from the Club Database. Log on, take the link to 'Results' and then select the link which says 'Click here to get to team stats on-line'. You can now see your swimmers PB times as well as all the results from recent Meets.

Once your swimmer starts competing it's a good idea to **keep a record of their times yourself so that they're readily available when you need to complete event application forms.**

### 5.2 Age Up Dates

One area where there is bound to be confusion is the differing age groups and why your swimmer is in one age group for one competition and another age group for another one. This is down to the 'Age Up' date for the competition in question.

Consider the following:-

- Our Club Championships have an 'age up' date of 31<sup>st</sup> December. This means that the age group you will be in, e.g, U9, U10, U11 etc is determined by how old your swimmer will be on 31<sup>st</sup> December even though our Sprint meet takes place in January.
- The 'age up' date for the Peanuts league is currently the 30<sup>th</sup> June so your swimmer with a birthday in May can swim in the December Peanuts Gala when they are 8 yrs old as they will be 9yrs old by the 30<sup>th</sup> June.
- The 'age up' date for Counties is the date of the last session of the meet,.
- Other competitions/Opens will have their own 'age up' date.

One thing to remember is that if British Swimming set a single date for all competitions your swimmer would continually come up against the same competitors and might get disheartened. This way everyone has a chance to shine at different times.

Don't worry too much – your swimmer will always be swimming with swimmers of a similar age as themselves whether its described as U10 in one competition and U11 in another. The different 'age up' date for different competitions won't mean your swimmer is at a disadvantage in the meet.

## 6. Awards, medals and things

Everyone likes to feel that they're succeeding and you'll find that there are a number of ways for Swimmers to mark their progression; some are more obvious than others.

### 6.1 Medals

Most individual competitions will reward first, second and third places with the normal coloured medals; sometimes the winner will receive a trophy of some kind. Don't expect fancy award ceremonies with anthems played and flags hoisted! The results of races will be posted on the wall somewhere around the pool, normally in a number of different places so that both swimmers and parent/guardians can see them. The locations of these lists are normally easily identifiable by the crowds gathered around them. If the swimmer qualifies for an award they need to collect it from a medal table.

### 6.2 ASA award scheme

You will see swimmers from CoStA and other clubs with club polo shirts adorned with a number of round badges and flashes on the back; these are from the ASA award scheme. Through the scheme swimmers can collect badges when they have successfully achieved the required times at specific strokes and distances.

3 types of award which relate to the length of the swim:

- Sprint: distances up to 100m for all strokes including Individual Medley (IM)
- Middle Distance: 200m for all strokes including IM and 400m front crawl
- Distance: 400m IM and 800m and 1500m front crawl

Times are graded at 4 levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum, with a separate award for each stroke. Once the swimmer achieves a time at that level for any stroke, they can claim the round badge which relates to the distance (i.e. Sprint, Middle & Distance) and the relevant stroke flash and then collect further flashes as times are achieved for each stroke at that distance. The ASA times for the most popular distances are posted on the Club web-site.

Once gained awards may be purchased from the club shop.

## 6.3 BAGCATS

You'll probably come across BAGCATS<sup>6</sup> for the first time if your swimmer goes to Counties. BAGCATS are a point-based system operated by the ASA. Their objective is to encourage development across multiple strokes and distances for swimmers under 14 and to discourage specialisation at too early a stage in a swimmer's career.

The good news is that you don't have to swim any additional events to gain BAGCAT points. At Counties, in addition to awards for success in a specific stroke over a specific distance, success will also be measured on BAGCAT points across the competition as a whole.

If you are aiming to get maximum BAGCAT points you need to swim the following events with points awarded for times gained against national averages:-

- 50m of either Free, Breast, Fly, Back
- 200m Free
- 200m Form stroke (no mystery here – it just means 200m of any stroke but Free)
- IM – either 100m, 200, 400m depending on age

You shouldn't need to spend too much time worrying about this until your swimmer reaches the Junior Squad, but if you're interested more detail may be found on the ASA website<sup>7</sup>

## 6.4 Shop

The shop operates on most Sunday and Monday evenings at Westminster Lodge generally between 7.30pm and 8.30pm.

The shop stocks a very wide range of precisely the sort of stuff you'll see people wandering around with and which will very quickly become essential. Track suits, kit bags, swimming costumes, hats, goggles, floats of various shapes and sizes, fins (short flippers!), net bags to hold floats and fins, t-shirts; and not forgetting the ASA awards – which is why we put the section about the shop here!

There is also a small selection of sweet/snacks to boost sugar levels after training.

Not only is it more convenient than the internet, any profit it makes is ploughed back into the club. Please support it.

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<sup>6</sup> British Age Group Categories

<sup>7</sup> An introduction to BAGCATS may be found at <http://www.britishswimming.org/vsite/vcontent/page/custom/0.8510.5157-182570-199788-42591-269055-custom-item,00.html> and detailed categories at <http://www.britishswimming.org/vsite/vcontent/page/custom/0.8510.5157-182570-199788-42591-269055-custom-item,00.html>

## 7. Finally; there's you!

### 7.1 Communication

There is a lot going on at the club and our commitment to you is to try our best to keep you informed about it all. To do so we use three principle means of communication

- The club notice board at Westminster Lodge and the High School
- The club website ([www.costaasc.org](http://www.costaasc.org))
- Email (and for people without email, post<sup>8</sup>).

This all involves a lot of effort on our part. In return we'd ask three things.

- Please look at the notice board and website on a regular basis
- Please read your emails/post and respond or act in a timely basis
- Please let us know if any of your contact details change

### 7.2 Getting involved

We can write documents like this, send you emails, and put stuff on the notice board and web site, but at the end of the day the three best ways to find out about what's going on are to

- talk to the coaches
- talk to people in the gallery; some of them will be better informed, others will be in the same state of uncertainty as you. Either way you'll find talking about it helps.
- get involved, if not in the day to day operation of the club, then in the running of events.

The club has very few paid members of staff so everyone else you see coaching, or managing competition entries, taking registers, running the shop, generally wandering about the pool in a more or less business-like fashion, or sending you annoying emails is a volunteer who is helping out because they want to help their children swim. And that's just the general day to day operation of the club.

Every time we stage an event like the Club Championships it takes nearly 50 people to run it – that's about 1 volunteer for every 3 families in the club. Some of these jobs require qualifications; many don't.

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<sup>8</sup> But please be aware that as the vast majority of members do have access to emails there is a presumption about the speed with which communication is received and can be acted upon that is not matched by post

- If you find yourself intrigued by the jobs that require qualifications at some level (time-keeping, judging or coaching) then please talk to Sarah Moore, the club chairman; the club always needs more people with these skills.
- If you've got a good memory for faces then perhaps "whipping" might be for you; it might sound alarming but swimmers have to be got to their races on time somehow!
- Or perhaps you don't mind taking ticket money, handing out refreshments to poolside helpers, taking messages between the judges, handling medal and trophy distribution or any of the other tasks without which we'd never be able to mount an event

Getting involved is a way of putting names to faces, becoming known yourself, and beginning to find your way around the other complexities of the club that this note can't begin to address.

If that's not enough then think of it this way. For any competition you'll have to spend a minimum 4 or 5 hours at the pool to watch just a few minutes of racing in which your swimmer is involved. It's hot, sticky and, frankly, can be very boring. Poolside helping is cooler (trust us – heat rises!) and much more interesting.

So when the notices go up asking for people to help, please don't assume that it will be too complicated, or that everyone who did it last time will do it again. Get involved, because it's only by all of us getting involved that our swimmers can do what they all enjoy so much ...

## swim

Sorry this has gone on so long. If you have any ideas of how this document might be improved (either by cutting out information you find irrelevant or by adding content that isn't covered) please email [Sarah McAlister@btinternet.com](mailto:Sarah McAlister@btinternet.com)

A final note - Thanks to Hemel Hempstead Swimming Club for allowing us to freely plagiarise their survival guide – many thanks.

May 2012