

# Confused about Open Meets and Galas etc?

Here is a guide which will hopefully help you. If you want to know more, please just ask a coach or committee member!

## What is an Open Meet?

Competitions or Meets are classified as "open" or "closed".

- An Open Meet, as the name implies, is open to all and usually hosted by another swimming club.
- Closed competitions are for selected groups only e.g. South West Regional Age Groups, Somerset County Championships and our own Club Championships.

At all Meets included in our competition calendar, the club provides Coaches and/or Team Managers to support the swimmers and we stay together as a team. Any club swimmers can enter provided they meet the entry criteria (see below) and will be competing as individuals against other swimmers from both KASC and other clubs. There will always be an "Age as at" date given in the entry details (usually the last day of the Meet but this may be changed to 31<sup>st</sup> December for all licensed Meets from next year). This dictates what age group you will be competing in. Swimmers can only compete from the age of 9 in England (8 in Wales).

You don't need to be invited to enter Meets by a coach. If you would like to try competitive swimming, just keep an eye on forthcoming Meets listed on our website under Events (or the club noticeboard) for entry details. If you are not sure then speak to your coach, who will help you decide if a Meet is suitable. Entry fees are payable by the swimmer.

The top three positions in each event and each age group (and sometimes the top eight) usually receive an award eg a medal. The age groups are often single year age groups (especially for the younger swimmers), and sometimes double eg 10-11 years. Heats are seeded and swum according to entry time, irrespective of age. There may also be overall competition awards for the top male and female swimmers and, at the County Championships and Regional finals, BAGCAT awards (which will be explained later).

Some Meets take place in a 25m pool and are called Short Course. Others will be swum in a 50m pool and are called Long Course. When first entering Meets, it is probably best to stick to Short Course Meets.

Competitions are targeted at different standards of swimmer and are designated a level between 1 and 4. KASC enters Meets at all levels so that all our swimmers have a chance to compete at the right level for them.

## Licensing/Grading System

The Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) licenses Meets at levels 1 (highest) to 4 (lowest).

- A **Level 1** Meet will have minimum qualifying times and is broadly aimed at swimmers aiming for National Qualifying Times (NQTs).
- **Level 2** Meets have minimum qualifying times and upper limit times; these are aimed at those looking for District and County qualifying times (QTs).
- **Level 3** Meets typically have upper limit QTs (swimmers may not enter if their times are faster than the specified QTs) and are aimed at County and Club swimmers.
- **Level 4** Meets may have QTs in the same way as Level 3 meets, but they have more freedom in terms of using electronic timing and qualified officials.

## Why Should I Enter an Open Meet?

An Open Meet is the only way for you to get qualifying times as an individual to be able to enter County, Regional and National events. It's a way of measuring yourself against others, improving your Personal Best times and maybe even winning medals!

## Entry Procedure

The procedure for entry is the same for all meets.

- ⚡ Check the information on the website to ensure that the meet is suitable and that you do not have any other commitments on the relevant day(s).
- ⚡ Decide which events you would like to enter. Bear in mind that entering too many events will be very tiring and may mean you do not swim at your best. If in doubt ask your coach who will be happy to advise you. Open Meets often have early starts and mean long days.
- ⚡ Fill out the entry form and **before the closing deadline** hand it, with a cheque for the relevant amount made payable to "KASC", to Helen King, Andy Gussey or your coach.
- ⚡ **Entries will not be processed unless the fees are paid in advance.**
- ⚡ We then collate all the entries and send the information to the host club.

## Filling out the Entry Form

In most cases, we use the standard Keynsham ASC Entry form. You must fill out all the information requested as otherwise it could cause delays in processing and submitting the entry forms.

- The swimmer's ASA number is required. This is a wholly numeric reference (ie 123456), and can be found on the swimmer's ASA registration card, which all swimmers should have. The number will not alter from year to year so please keep the card in a safe place.
- Only enter events permitted for your age.

- Include your “personal best times” (PBs) in the box provided against each event to be entered. You can find your PBs on the Club Website under “My accounts”. (PBs should include the full time, down to hundredths of a second eg 3.02.45 and not just to the nearest whole second or tenth of a second). Times used on entry forms must have been achieved at a Licensed Meet (an official ASA accredited meet), not in training, at club time trials, in a gala or league competition.

Some Meets require times achieved in a 25m (short course) pool and others in a 50m (long course) pool. If you have a PB achieved in a short course pool and you are entering a long course Meet, you can convert your PB. There is a conversion tool on the Web site where your previous results are recorded. If you do not have a PB time for that event (maybe it's your first Meet?) then you can put N/T (ie “No time” but only when no qualifying time is required). Otherwise ask your coach about entry times.

### **Closing Dates**

The KASC closing date is always earlier than the organisers' closing date, and is set to enable us to process all the information and return it to the meet organisers in time; if entries are late then the date may be missed and all KASC entries would be rejected.

Some meets operate on a first come, first served entry basis, and in these cases entries need to be in well in advance of the organisers' stated closing date to try and ensure our entries are accepted.

### **Qualifying Times**

Competitions are limited to certain durations so this means that organisers have to limit the entries. This is done through qualifying times. Meet requirements usually include **qualifying times** and sometimes a separate list of slower **consideration times**.

If qualifying times are stipulated, only swimmers who have achieved those times or faster are able to enter that event. Even then they are not guaranteed entry. If the meet is oversubscribed, swimmers with the slower entry times may be rejected or "scratched" from that event. Those entering with consideration times have to wait and see whether their entries are accepted or rejected.

Lists of scratched entries are usually available on the relevant organisation's website, and the swimmer's coach will be informed in advance of the meet. The fee for a scratched entry is refunded via the Competition Secretary. Sometimes there is an upper time limit as well as a lower limit to prevent higher standard swimmers from entering lower level competitions.

### **Procedures at Meets**

To ensure the safety of our swimmers, all those competing need to sign in with the coach or team manager when they arrive. Please note that all swimmers will be required to stay with the team at all times and not sit with their parents. This is good for team spirit but will also ensure that no races are

missed. If they need to leave poolside for any reason, they must tell the coach or team manager where they are going. Parents should collect their children promptly once they have finished all their races for the day and sign out with the coach/team manager.

### **Meet Programmes**

Meet programmes are available for sale at the venue, listing all swimmers in each event in order of seed time, and providing general information about the event. They are very useful if only to work out when your child is likely to be swimming and schedule comfort breaks and trips to the café accordingly!

### **Results**

There is usually some form of electronic timing in use at meets. Timekeepers provide backup in the event that the system is not operating. The results of each race will be shown on the display board, but they have to be ratified by the referee and declared so by the announcer before they are deemed "official". There may be disqualifications for the infringement of technical or stroke rules, or the electronic timing may not have been operating correctly (eg a swimmer may not have touched the pad hard enough to trigger it).

Official results are usually posted on the host club or organisation's website within a couple of days. We also update each swimmers times / results on our own website for you and the coaches to be able to see.

### **BAGCATs**

BAGCATs may be disappearing from next year (under proposals currently being consulted upon). Currently, however, the ASA advocates that during their development each swimmer should train and compete in a number of events, and not specialise in a particular event or stroke. In the UK, events are divided into categories, the British Age Group categories or BAGCATs.

The five categories are:

- **50m events** (any stroke)
- **100m events** (any stroke)
- **Form** (200m backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly)
- **Distance** (200m, 400m, 800m or 1500m freestyle)
- **Individual Medley or IM** (100m IM for 9-11 year olds and 200m or 400m IM for older swimmers)

When a swimmer competes in a BAGCAT event, their time is converted into points that take into account their age and sex. The BAGCAT conversion factors enable swimmers in any particular age group to compare their times and improvement against the best in the world on a fair basis, irrespective of the stroke. The world's best times are used to give a benchmark of 1000 points per stroke so swimmers can see how they compare with the world's best. The nearer to the magic 1000 mark, the closer to being on top of the world!

A swimmer may take part in as many events in a season as they choose to, but only their highest points score in each category will count towards their

final BAGCAT total. The overall position for a swimmer is the sum of the best point score in each of the 5 categories. It is advisable therefore to enter every BAGCAT category in the Age Groups if you have the qualifying times. Some competitions make awards to swimmers based on their BAGCAT totals at the end of the meet.

## **How do Galas and League Competitions differ from Open Meets?**

In League competitions and many Galas, you compete as part of a team against other teams. PBs achieved at a team competition cannot be used to enter Open Meets.

### **League Competitions**

KASC always enter a team for the Junior League (for swimmers aged 9-12 as at the date of the final round) and the Arena League which is very important for the club's standing. We have also this year entered the Mini Series League to compete against other local club teams. The dates for these events are listed on the KASC website under "Events".

For League competitions, the coaches choose the team based on age and the level of the competition etc. An overriding factor is generally to choose the fastest team.

An e-mail will be sent to all swimmers who may be required. A notice will also go up on the KASC notice board with details of the date and venue for all those who may be required to confirm their availability (or otherwise). A team will then be selected from those available.

### **Home Competitions**

Throughout the year, there are also various competitions held at Keynsham ie Club Captains gala, Club Championships, and the Prelims gala. Keep an eye on the website and noticeboard for information about these.

### **Being part of the team**

Being picked for the team is always great. If you are not picked for one competition, please don't be disheartened. You may be picked for another at a different time of year or as you progress through the club.

For team events, the Coaches will allocate certain races to those selected so it is very important that, once you have committed to being part of the team, you do not change your mind. If you are sick, you need to let the Coach responsible know as soon as possible so that a reserve can be found.

Galas and Leagues are great fun and team spirit is the number one priority. The Coaches ask that you please make yourself available if selected.

### **Andy Gussey**

KASC - Open Meet Manager