**W&DSC Competition Guide**

Throughout the year the club competes in many different types and levels of competition, which will enable swimmers of all standards to gain personal best times in a variety of events (not just swimmers best stroke) and experience competitive racing in a team environment. Each year’s season starts in September and runs until end of July, with traditionally August as rest. It is acknowledged that throughout the season swimmers training is based around cyclic intervals with competitions planned throughout the year to complement their training cycles. For senior squads each cycle with have a ‘taper’ phase that will prepare swimmers to peak for major competitions. The length of these cycles and phases depends on swimmers squad/age/sex. The head coach will communicate out to parents when swimmers are about to prepare for a major competition.

Swimmers representing W&DSC at Galas, Open Meets and major Championships should wear Witney t-shirts and Black Witney swim hats. Although swimmers are often swimming individual events, they should still support their team mates by cheering them on and waiting until the end of the gala to hear the team results. Swimmers should also travel on the team bus, where provided, as this also promotes team spirit.

Competitions range from club events such as time trials and Club/Diddy championships to league galas and Swim England/British Swimming affiliated championships. Whilst the vast majority of pools in the UK are short course (25m), most of the major championships are swum in long course (50m) pools therefore it is important for swimmers to have experience in competing in both short and long course pools. Swimmers need to compete in a variety of different standard meets, within the swimmers comfort zone and those that challenge. Each swimmer’s total and type of competitions entered in is tracked by coaches to ensure swimmers to do not over compete and risk becoming fatigued (this is particularly important for junior swimmers), as well as ensuring a good combination of different level meets. This also ensures that all swimmers get the chance to compete throughout the year in not only gala’s, but time trials, club/diddy championships and open meets (which are the swimmers responsibility to enter).

The clubs competition fixture list can be found on the club notice board at the Windrush Leisure Centre and can also be downloaded off the W&DSC website. Results from each competition (gala’s, open meets, club events, County’s, Regional’s, Nationals) can be found via email and on the club notice board and website. The red star indicates a personal best time and should be recorded in swimmers log books for future use for entering meets (can also use On Deck app).

**Gala’s** – normally non licensed

Each gala has a different programme, age groups etc (apart from league rounds) and therefore each gala’s team selection is different. The team travel together on the team coach, parents are welcome to come and support. The coaches competition tracker ensures all swimmers get a equal opportunity throughout the year to compete in team gala’s, however if swimmers are on the holiday list or pull out of several gala’s then they may miss their chance at that time of the year to race in club gala’s.

For club gala’s a team will be selected by the head coach 2 weeks prior to the gala and put on the club notice board for parents/swimmers to tick that they are available to swim, plus communicated out on email/website. There is a holiday list on the club notice board for parents to indicate when swimmers are unavailable for selection due to holidays etc. However parents should not be planning birthday parties etc on competition days. After each gala the team manager will organise a vote of parents/officials (and sometimes swimmers) for the ‘swimmer of the match’ and runner up awards of a yellow duck. This award does not necessarily go to the swimmer(s) who have ‘won’ the most swims, but other personal achievements such a special PB, not getting disqualified etc. The team manager has the final decision.

* **League Galas**

The club compete in 3 leagues throughout the year that will enable all club swimmers to compete. These leagues give the club a County and National ranking after the 3 rounds (gala’s) are swum. Because of this the fastest team is selected and this may mean swimmers are selected to support in relays and may not have an individual swim. All swimmers should be proud to compete for Witney in a league gala no matter what races they are chosen to swim, it is a team ranking achieved.

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| *League* | *Rounds* | *Standard* | *Ages* | *Age as of* | *Events* |
| National Arena League  (NAL) | October  November  December | A team | 11,13, 15 and open | End of year | 11/u – 50m  13/u – 100m  15/u – 100m  Open – 100m |
| Chiltern’s League | February  March  April | Time Banded | 10,12, 14 and open | Last round | 10 to 14 – 50m  Open – 100m |
| Milton Keynes Junior League  (MKJL) | June  July  September | A team | 9, 10, 11 and 12’s | End of year | 9 – 25m  10 to 12 – 50m |

* **Trophy Galas**

Throughout the year trophy galas are carefully slotted into the programme to ensure all swimmers compete. Such galas are ‘A’ standard, time banded, relay or fun gala’s. Each gala is carefully chosen to fit in with the league galas and Swim England major championships such as County, Regional and National. At trophy gala’s normally each swimmer selected will be chosen to swim a collection of relays and at least 1 individual swim (although this may not be their favourite or best event). If a gala is time banded or graded B or C, then ‘A’ swimmers still may be selected but will be chosen to swim events they do not normally compete in ‘A’ standard galas.

**Time Trials** (non-licensed)

These events are held in the spring/summer months using club training time. Events are important for measuring progression towards the end of the season and allowing all swimmers (including masters) to gain up to date times/PB’s in events they may not have swum in a while. Swimmers also get more race experience and race practice. Events swum at time trials are based on squads and age. Each season can be different depending what the head coach feels needs targeting.

**Club/Diddy Championships**

*Club Championships*

The annual club championships are open to all members of the club (ages 9 years +). The swimmers age is as of 31st December in the year. The heats and heat declared events are swum in the autumn months, finals in the Winter months. All swimmers of age are encouraged to compete in a variety of events at these championships. Younger/newer swimmers can gain competitive experience in a home environment; older/more experienced swimmers can work towards gain personal best times and possible county qualifying times. Heats and finals are licensed level 4 for entry in ONB county championships.

*Diddy Championships*

The annual ‘diddy championships’ are open to all junior swimmers (ages 8 – 12 years). The swimmers age is as of 31st December in the year of competition. Heats are held in Feb/March and finals in end of April. Finals are licensed level 4 for entry in ONB county championships.

**Target Open Meets**

Each open meet is British Swimming licensed to a certain level. Open Meets are licensed according to the purpose of their competition as Level 1, 2, 3 or 4 (please see ‘what is an open meet’ document for more information).

Swimmers at the beginning of their journey starting to build their competitive data base should enter development meets (level 4). We attend many development meets that are local and suitable for developing swimmers.

The Head Coach selects specific open meets throughout the year and advises swimmers and squads which meet they should attend. Swimmers are encouraged to enter these meets to gain, for example: county qualifications; experience of open meets in a team environment or to gain personal best times. Accordingly swimmers should only enter meets as advised by their coach. Swimmers should enter specific events at target meets for either specific qualifying times or to gain up to date times in certain strokes/distances. Parents/Swimmers can ask their lead coach or the Head Coach for advice.

Meets are spread throughout the year depending on the aim of the meet. It is the parent’s responsibility to follow the clubs entry procedure by the internal closing date.

**County/Regional/National Championships**

There are 3 major British Swimming Championships that swimmers can aspire to compete in:

1. *Oxon and North Bucks County Championships* – January/February

These championships are split into two with Long distance events and age groups relays in January, and the main championships in February. Age is end of the competition year. All events apart from relays and 800m/1500m FC have considered and accepted qualifying times which must be licensed. Achieving a considered qualifying time does not guarantee acceptance into the championships, swimmers need to aim for accepted times. The qualification period opens usually mid-Feb and closes mid-December, so swimmers have many chances to gain qualification times, but they need to plan in case of any unforeseen circumstances such as illness.

1. *Swim South East Regional Championships* *(Age group and youth)* – April/May

These are swum in 50m pools – long course. The programme is divided into two championships, youth (15years plus) and age Group (11 – 14years). The Youth championships compete over a 3 day weekend with all events and Age Group over 2 separate weekends. Qualifying times must be achieved in a level 1, 2 or 3 meet from 1st June onwards. Ages for both championships are as of the end of the year.

There is also short course Winter Regional Championships in early November.

1. *National Championships* – July/August

The summer nationals are in July and August, and are split between British championships and then home nations (English/Scottish/Welsh). There are no qualifying times, instead swimmers need to achieve a national long course ranking. The opportunity to achieve national ranking is during the qualifying window March to May, where after swimmers in the top ranking for British/English/Scottish/Welsh Nationals are then invited to compete. Winter short course Nationals takes place in December, where swimmers need to gain open qualifying times.

The club aims to have Witney representation at these championships and training is tailored towards them. For those who do qualify and compete training will be ‘tapered’ so swimmers can have a peak performance for such championships.