



## ANACONDA SWIMMING CLUB

### A PARENTS GUIDE TO COMPETITIVE SWIMMING

Anaconda Swimming Club is a competitive swimming club offering children of all ages and abilities the chance to develop and enhance their skills as swimmers in a competitive environment. The swimming environment is one that establishes friendships, endorses sportsmanship and promotes a healthy and competitive lifestyle. Success in competitive swimming comes through hard work and dedication, but most importantly through fun and enjoyment.

It can be a confusing and daunting experience when trying to understand how the competition structure works, and therefore we thought it would be a good idea to write a few pointers to show parents the different levels of galas available to the swimmers of Anaconda and hopefully answer any of those nagging questions you may have always wanted to ask.

We will discuss the following:

- Personal Best Times

This is the best way of measuring a swimmers improvement (also written in short as PB). We record all swimmers PBs.

- Club time trials – (compulsory)

An internal race night where swimmers compete to improve their PBs. These take place every month over, either, two days on odd months (Jan/March/May etc.) or one day on even months (Feb/April/June etc.).

- Club Championships – (compulsory)

These take place twice a year (in place of time trials) and swimmers race people in their own age groups for the chance to win medals and trophies.

- Club galas - Arena League and Junior League/graded and trophy galas

Club galas are held throughout the year and involve racing other local clubs. We select different teams for different galas based on a number of reasons; but we try to contact the parents 2-3 weeks before the gala.

- Open Meets – Development, County's, Regionals, Nationals

These competitions should be the main focus of a swimmers career. Any swimmer who holds a valid qualifying time can enter an open competition (providing submit their entry form before the closing date). We will send out entry forms for the above galas to those who qualify once the entry forms have been released.

## THE BASICS

### **PBs**

For those that don't know, PB stands for Personal Best. No matter their ability, each swimmer should soon become obsessed with beating their times for each different event and stroke. When your child first starts, PBS may not seem important but the obsession with getting a PB soon takes hold especially if your child is keen.

PBs will be recorded all galas and the club keeps a record of all the swimmer's best times on swimming software called Hy-Tek. These times are directly linked to our website which can be found on

<http://www.anacondaswimmingclub.org.uk/SwimmersTimes.htm> .These will show all your child's times to date.

### **CLUB TIME TRIALS**

The first experience your child may have of racing is Club Time Trials. These are compulsory, and it is a good way for you and your child to see how well they are progressing. The club time trials are held every month and events alternate between 50m trials (swam during odd months - Jan/March/May etc.) and another event chosen by the head coach during even months (Feb/April/June etc.). **All** trials are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 8pm every month, and then the following Monday **during odd months only**. This is because the 50m trials take longer to complete. Swimmers are time-trialled in all four events over 50 metres, then the four times are added together to give an aggregated time. Squad groups are chosen partly using this time.

### **CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Held twice a year; the first championships are the 50m championships. These are for all four strokes and open to 9/u, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 over. The second are the 100m championships, held over the four strokes and 100 IM (individual medley) and are open to the same age groups. Medals are given to the fastest three swimmers in each age and ribbons are given for swimmers placing 4<sup>th</sup> to 6th in each age group. During the 100m championships there is also the chance to win Top Boy and Top Girl trophy along with Most Improved Boy and Girl Trophies. To qualify for both these trophies the swimmer has to

enter all four strokes and not be disqualified. The Top Boy and Top girl trophy is awarded to the swimmers who have the highest aggregate between the county qualifying standard for their age group and their combined times from the championships. The Most Improved Boy and Girl Trophy are awarded to the swimmers who have improved their times the most from one year to the next over the four strokes. We are aiming to provide the dates of these championships at the beginning of the season.

## CLUB GALAS

### **GRADED GALAS**

These galas are mainly aimed at the Development and Senior squads, or swimmers in other squads that aren't one of the four fastest in their age group. They are a great way of introducing new swimmers to competitive swimming against other local clubs. The swimmer will learn the etiquette of racing at galas in a more relaxed environment. Most swimmers will be in the same position as most clubs use these Graded Galas to introduce new swimmers to competition. Each race has a time restriction set where no swimmer should swim faster than the time allocated, this ensures swimmers are all of the same ability. If a swimmer is faster on race day that is great because it means they have bettered their PB and that the training is paying off. If this happens and they swim faster than the allocated time they will get "upgraded" and in effect will lose points. **This is a good thing and should be encouraged!** The senior swimmers in the team take on the faster and longer events and are there to help and support the inexperienced swimmers and therefore help to create a team spirit and bonding. The swimmers really benefit from these galas and they enjoy the thrill of competing against other clubs.

### **TROPHY GALAS**

These galas are again against other local clubs and the team is picked from the whole of the main club. Some of the trophy galas can be graded. These galas add to the team spirit of the club and also help develop the swimmer as they compete against other club swimmers.

## **NATIONAL JUNIOR LEAGUE (M11)**

This is a league held over the months of April, May and June. There is one gala in each month. The age groups for these galas are 9yrs, 10/under, 11/under and 12/under. There are two divisions with 12 teams, each year the bottom three from Division 1 are relegated and the top three from Division 2 are promoted. The club that wins Division 1 goes through to the Southern Area Final to try and qualify for the National Finals.

This is a very high standard of gala against some of the best clubs in London and the surrounding area. If your child is selected they may swim individual races or just the relay races or indeed both. Every swimmer that is selected is an important part of the team and it is vital to have a full complement of swimmers available.

## **NATIONAL ARENA LEAGUE – LONDON DIVISION**

This league is for age groups u/12, u/14, u/16, and Open. It is held over October, November and December and like the Junior League there is one gala held every month, usually the second Saturday of each month. This is a very important competition for the club where only the fastest swimmers in each age group will be selected for the team. We expect all invited to accept the invitation to these compulsory galas. There are three divisions, Anaconda are in the second division competing against some of the most elite clubs in the south east. Our aim will be to compete for promotion this year.

## **LICENSED OPEN MEETS**

In addition to the team galas you also have Licensed Open Meets where the swimmer competes as an individual. There is a payment required for each event the swimmer enters. The cost ranges from £3 to £5 per event. On the day of the Meets Anaconda usually have a number of swimmers competing and they are joined by at least one coach who helps them to prepare for each race and then give them feedback after each swim.

There are four levels of licensed open meets; here is a short breakdown of each.

**LEVEL 4** –Is for club swimmers and those beginning to enter individual open competition.

**LEVEL 3-** Is for club swimmers who are seeking county and regional qualifying times. These meets have qualifying times and upper limit times set at an appropriate level and will provide a programme throughout the year to support the requirements of swimmers below regional level.

**LEVEL 2** – Is aimed at regional and national qualifiers and swimmers close to regional qualification. These meets take place in 25m pools and have a set minimum time for entry

**LEVEL 1** – Is aimed at national qualifiers and swimmers close to national qualification looking for opportunities to achieve national qualifying times. These meets take place in 50m pools and have a set minimum qualifying times for entry.

National qualifying times will be accepted from meets licensed at level 1 and 2.

Regional qualifying times will be accepted from meets licensed at level 1, 2, and 3

County qualifying times will be accepted from both licensed and unlicensed meets (e.g. time trials).

Licensed open meets are compulsory for children swimming in the competitive squads of the main club (all bar Development and Senior). We expect all swimmers to compete at the highest standard they qualify for. Middlesex County Amateur Swimming Association (MCASA) holds two Development galas every year; these are a great introduction to open meets. They are held in the spring and in the winter. The club will post the dates of the competitions on the website and if you have given an e-mail address the club will also send you all the details and entry forms via e-mail nearer the time. There is always a closing date for these meets and late entries are not accepted. **We expect all children to compete at this competition as is the first step towards achieving qualifying times for county and regional competitions.** Children are expected to enter a wide range of races over all distances between 50m – 400m. Please speak to the Head Coach for further guidance.

Getting licensed meet times are very important if the swimmer wants to progress as far as he or she can. As the swimmer gets faster they will want to swim in a whole range of events but some of these events will only accept licensed meet times. The swimmer can swim really fast times in club, trophy and Junior and Arena league meets but unfortunately none of those meets are licensed and the times achieved at those events are not accepted.

The ASA also holds a database of all official times recorded at licensed open galas. (When the details of the galas are posted they say whether or not it is licensed). Once the swimmer has competed at a licensed open meet they can find all their times on the British ASA or Middlesex ASA websites (see useful websites below).

The club is very keen to update the Anaconda website with news on all fixtures and open meets so the swimmers and parents are more informed of what is going on.

If your child is picked for a team gala it is important that he or she attends if you have confirmed an invitation. A lot of work is put into getting a team together and it is reassuring to turn up on poolside and you know you have a full team ready to swim. Obviously we live in busy times and of course the swimmer is not always going to be able to attend due to other commitments. The coaches totally understand this, as long as they are given plenty of notice to get a replacement there is no problem.

### **WHAT DOES “SC” (SHORT-COURSE) & “LC” (LONG-COURSE) MEAN?**

A short course (SC) time is the time you achieved in an event in a 25m pool. A long course (LC) time is the time you achieved in an event in a 50m pool.

For example, a time for 100m freestyle event swum in a short course (25m) pool is usually **faster** than the time for the same event in a long course (50m) pool because the turns are an advantage. That means SC and LC times can't be compared directly. The ASA uses a conversion factor to convert between the two:

<http://www.pullbuoy.co.uk/time.shtm>

The person organising your entries would normally do the conversions for you, as long as you make it clear whether your time was SC or LC.

## **USEFUL WEBSITES/ORGANISATIONS**

Swimmers and parents are encouraged to look at these websites for information about competitive swimming in the UK and for a whole range of opportunities for swimmers.

**British Swimming and The Amateur Swimming Association (ASA)**    <http://www.britishswimming.org>

**Middlesex County Amateur Swimming Association (MCASA)**    <http://www.middlesexswimming.com>

**London Swimming**    <http://www.londonswimming.org/>