

# A Guide to Open Meets

## Introduction

Mansfield Swimming Club is a Teaching and Skill development orientated club and as such it encourages all swimmers to enter selected competitions each season. The competitive aspect of swimming, **the meet**, can seem like a daunting and confusing prospect for those swimmers and parents new to the sport and to Mansfield. However, once you've experienced a couple you will quickly get into the swing of things, and there is always help at hand. Your coach is the definitive point of reference for matters relating to meets, and, as with every other aspect of the club's activities, there are plenty of people who have been involved in competitive swimming for many years who will be happy to advise you.

## The fixtures Calendar

The meet/fixtures calendar for the season is published on the club website, and is posted and updated monthly and is also on the notice board at Water Meadows Leisure Centre. It may be subject to change throughout the course of the season but members will be kept informed. Not all meets are relevant for all squads or all swimmers and it is the coach's decision as to who is entered for a particular meet.

## The Open Meet Coordinator

The open meet coordinator plays a vital role within the club and is responsible for distributing meet entry forms, collecting them in, and for co-ordinating the club's entry into meets. They are also responsible for managing the entries for the Club Championships.

## Competition Types

Competitions are classified as "open" or "closed". An open competition, as the name implies, is open to all, whilst closed competitions are for selected groups e.g. Midlands Age Groups, Nottinghamshire County Championships. For the majority of competitions, the club attends and stays together as a team, but the swimmers will be competing as individuals against other individuals. Usually the top three positions in events receive an award.

Sometimes there are overall competition awards for the top male and female swimmers, BAGCAT, or now NOTSCATS awards (which will be explained later) and an award for the top club.

There are also team competitions which consist of a set programme of events, normally including relays, and the coaches will select the fastest team to win. Each swim will earn points depending upon finish position, and the team with the most points at the end wins. The club may travel as a team by coach to such an event whereas for other competitions families travel independently.

Competitions are targeted at different standards of swimmer and are designated a level. Level 1 is for national standard competitors, and Level 3 for the slower or younger swimmer.

### **Before the event/meet**

Open Meets are open to full members who meet the relevant age and time qualifications; entry fees are payable by the swimmer. Each swimmer competes for him or herself for medals, ribbons and improved times, and our top swimmers for each event and age group earn points for working towards a Top Club trophy. The Club attends various Open Meets throughout the year, at different levels.

### **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 good 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.

Mansfield enters meets at all levels so that all our swimmers have a chance to compete at the right level for them.

Please check the website on the Club Calendar on the home screen.

Coaches will advise swimmers of suitable meets. If you have not been given details of a meet which you would like to enter then speak to your coach, who will help you decide if it is suitable for you.

### **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 in full](#)
- Sign the entry form and return it, with a cheque for the relevant amount made payable to “Mansfield SC”, to the club desk, if the desk is not manned then hand to your open meet coordinator who will ensure this is passed to the correct official by the closing date.
- We then collate all the entries and send the information to the club hosting the meet.
- Once entries have closed, the host club decides which entries to accept and sends details back to the desk or your open meet coordinator. In some cases, there are entry cards but these are becoming less and less, which detail the event, submitted time and personal details.
- We check through the cards and send them out to the swimmers via the coaches. If there are no cards, then we will detail the relevant information on a slip of paper for each swimmer.

- If there are any rejections, then details of any refunds available will also be given. You can choose to carry any refunds forward to future entries, or have the money refunded, or you can donate it to the Club to help with the additional costs which are not covered by individual entry fees.

### **Filling out the entry form**

You must fill out all the information requested as otherwise it can cause delays in processing and in sending in the completed forms.

REMEMBER TO GET TO KNOW OUR TIMES.

You must put the swimmer's ASA number on the form. This is a wholly numeric reference (i.e. 123456), and is shown on the ASA registration card which all swimmers should have been given. The number will not alter from year to year so please keep the card in a safe place. ASA numbers based on the old format are not accepted, and your registration number is not your date of birth.

Please ensure you only enter events which are allowed for your age, and put down your personal best times (PBs) in the box provided. You will all have a record of PBs from the club website on the Members page. This information is constantly updated by the club. Please can you ensure that you have a correct record of PBs. In addition, PBs must include the full time, down to hundredths of a second (for example 3.02.45) and not just to the nearest whole second or tenth of a second.

### **Other Points**

In the past we have accepted some entries even though the closing date has passed. The Mansfield SC 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 Mansfield SC 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.

The coaching team, or open meet coordinator should not have to chase swimmers for the completed entry form, remember you train for many hours and the competitions are a check to see how you are progressing-

A VITAL PART OF YOUR DEVELOPMENT.

The club will publish Open Meets they shall be attending- visit the fixtures page regularly or if you have any questions please speak to your coach.

Entry forms for competitions will be given to swimmers for completion as directed by the coaches/open meet coordinator and should returned as soon as possible and certainly before the deadline on the form. If you need help, **the coach will advise on what events he or she feels the swimmer should enter.**

Collating all the club entries is a mammoth task and the timescales are tight. If the overall club entry is

delayed there is a significant risk that we will be rejected from a meet, which would have a major impact on the coaching plan because the competition calendar is designed to complement the training season.

Please provide all the relevant information – name, DOB, age, ASA membership number (searchable on the British Swimming website if you mislay your card), event numbers and PBs (see below), and don't forget to include a cheque to cover the required entry fee, made payable to DVASC.

### **Personal Best Times**

Swimmers are responsible for keeping a record of times they achieve for the events they swim in competitions. These are referred to as Personal Bests or PBs. Coaches have records of these but given the numbers involved they cannot spend valuable time advising swimmers of their PBs for every meet.

Times used on entry forms must have been achieved at a Licensed Meet (an official, ASA accredited meet), not in training or at club time trials. When a swimmer has not done an event for more than five months, you should insert the time but mark with an asterisk stating the date of the swim. Likewise, mark with an asterisk if the swimmer has not done the event before. On reviewing the entries prior to submission via the competition secretary, the coach will then make an informed decision about what time to submit. Only coaches have the authority to change times, based on what they believe is achievable by an individual swimmer.

### **Time Conversions**

Some meets require times achieved in a 25m (short course) pool and others in a 50m (long course) pool. There are tools available to convert between the two, in the event that the swimmer has only the "wrong" type of time. Traditional comparative performance tables are accessible on the British Swimming website. There are also online conversion tools on [pullbuoy.co.uk](http://pullbuoy.co.uk) and [swimmingworldmagazine.com](http://swimmingworldmagazine.com), although their results do vary and should be taken as a guide only. Always check with your coach.

### **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 open meet coordinator 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.

## Age Groups

Most competitions will organise swimmers into age groups for awards. Sometimes these are single year age groups, sometimes double, with awards presented for the top swimmers in each event in each age group. Heats are spearheaded according to entry time, irrespective of age.

UK competitions run on a system called "Age on Day", which means that the age group a swimmer enters is their age on the final day of competition. If a competition runs over several weekends, like the Nottinghamshire County Championships, swimmers enter all events as age on the last day of the year (31<sup>st</sup> December 2016)

In addition to individual age groups, competitions may also be split into Age, Youth and Senior groups. **Age** is up to 13 for girls and 14 for boys. **Youth** is from these ages to 17 for females and 18 for males, and **Senior** is all ages above these.

## 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 (e.g. a swimmer may not have touched the pad hard enough to trigger it). Official results are usually posted on the walls after the events, and are often available on the host club or organisation's website within a couple of days. We also post the results on our own website.

## BAGCATs

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**, **100m**, **FORM**, **Distance** and **IM** (100IM for 9-11 year olds and 200 or 400IM for older swimmers). **FORM** is one of the three strokes which have specific technical requirements, i.e. 200m breaststroke, butterfly or backstroke). Freestyle is not a FORM stroke but is used for **distance** events (200, 400, 800 or 1500).

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 give swimmers a more balanced view of their stroke improvements and ensure that **all** of their strokes progress. They 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.

### **National Rankings**

All the results from licensed meets are forwarded to British Swimming which maintains the [ASA National Rankings Database](#). This can be accessed on the British Swimming website, and ranks each swimmer in all of the age groups, for each stroke and distance, for long course and short course.

### **Club Records & Rankings**

Club records for each event are maintained by the club and displayed on the website. They are updated periodically from the meet results, and are available to view on the website.

If any information on the records page is incorrect please notify the club and we will correct this upon evidence of the Swimmers Name: Meet: Date of swim: Event and Time achieved, official results sheet or web evidence via ASA rankings will be sufficient for the record to be amended. You can appreciate that this is a big task and with the passage of time, changes in club personnel some records may have been missed.