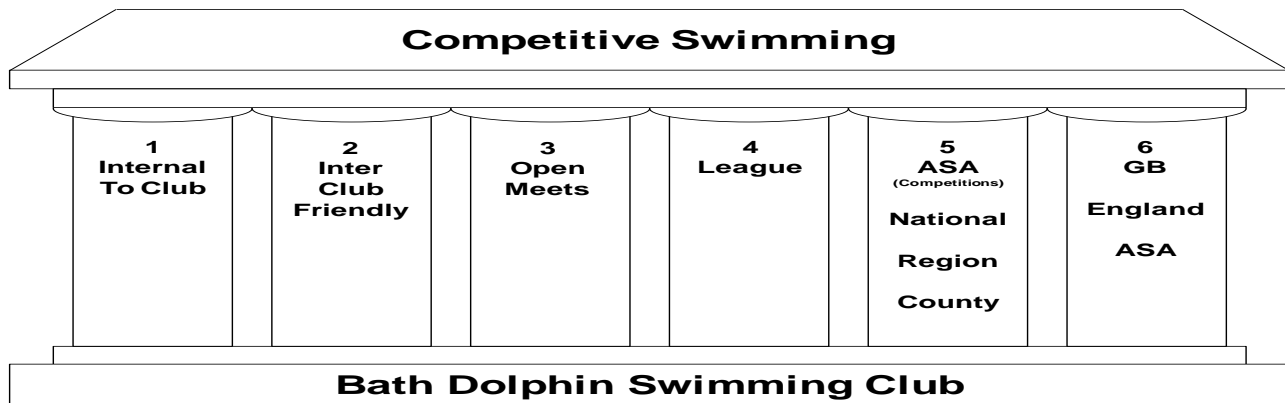




# Rough Guide To Competitive Swimming



1. Understanding and experiencing the different types of competitive swimming can be mentally stimulating, exhilarating and unique at best, a bit boring, hot, squashed and bum numbing at worst! This is not a survival guide on how to cope as a swimmer or parent but a rough guide to the different types of competition. Like all sports there are many rules that govern competitive swimming that can also cause confusion.
2. Competitive swimming in the most simplistic form can be considered like a Greek acropolis with each pillar being a particular type and standard.



## **Pillar 1 – Internal To Club**

These are competitions that only Club members can compete in. There is no swimming governing body (i.e. the ASA) age restrictions for this level. The Club Championships, and the Graham Cutting QPM Memorial sprint gala fall into this pillar.

## **Pillar 2 – Inter Club “Friendly”**

As the name implies these are friendly competitions between Clubs. The number of Clubs competing would be restricted to the number of lanes in the swimming pool and normally a minimum age restriction of 9 years & above. This type of gala used to be a once a month fixture for BDSC but unfortunately in recent years they have been in decline. Selection for representing BDSC would normally be based on the current fastest swimmer for a given event or where it would be for the overall benefit to the team.

## **Pillar 3 – Open Meets**

Normally any swimmer from any Club can compete in an Open Meet. There are many different types (ability, age, event distance etc) but an entry fee always has to be paid. Minimum age for competing is 9 years of age. BDSC regularly competes in the Bristol North SC Junior Open Meet (9 to 12 years) and the Tigersharks Open Meet (all ages). Most Open Meets are now "licensed" (see para 4 below).

## **Pillar 4 – League**

There are many different types of league competition some of which culminate in a national final. BDSC competes in the National Arena League “Western” (first division), National Junior League “Southern”, and (from 2017) Cotswold League. League galas include both individual and team events. There is a minimum age restriction of 9 years of age and above. The venue for these competitions can be any part of the South West and South Wales. BDSC will always swim its strongest team. Swimmers are required to compete in any event (even if it's not their "best event") where this will be of greatest benefit to the team.



# Rough Guide To Competitive Swimming



## **Pillar 5 – Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) - English swimming's National Governing Body**

BDSC is affiliated to the ASA through Somerset County ASA and the ASA South West Region. Consequently there are 3 levels of competition - County, Regional, and National each year. Qualifying times & specific conditions normally apply in order to enter. In simple terms there are 3 formats:

- 1. Age Groups**, e.g. 10/11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 & over.
- 2. Championships** is where the fastest 8 swimmers overall (irrespective of age) from the heats compete for a trophy that they retain for 1 year.
- 3. Masters** for swimmers 25 years of age and above. Swimmers compete in 5 year age bands (e.g. 25 to 29, 70 to 74 etc).

Minimum age for County is 10 years, 11 years for Regional, and 12 (female)/13 (male) years for Nationals. Programme of events will normally be from 50m - 1,500m depending on stroke. **County, Regional, National entry times must have been achieved at a "licensed" meet** (see para 4 below).

## **Pillar 6 – GB, England and ASA**

This is the higher end of swimming. The first rung on the ladder is being selected to swim for Somerset County ASA at inter-County events. Selection to represent England or Great Britain is the highest honour that a swimmer can get and have the privilege to compete in competitions like the Commonwealth Games, World Championships and Olympics.

### **Competition "Age At" Rule**

- This can cause plenty of confusion! There are normally two that are used:
  - age as at 31 Dec in the year of competition.
  - age on day/specific date.

Depending on a swimmer's birth date, gala date, and it's terms & conditions, it is possible for a swimmer to compete in 2 different age groups. For example a swimmer born 1 August 2002, "age as at 31 Jul 2016" = 13 year age group, "age as at 31 Dec 2016" = 14 year age group.

### **Some Other bits - Licensed Meets, ASA Ranking, Heats, Finals & Heat Declared Winner,**

- Licensed Meets are swimming events licensed by the ASA. This means they have to meet certain standards. There are 4 levels with level 1 & 2 being the "highest standard." Further information can be found at <http://www.swimming.org/sport/licensed-meets/>. Times achieved at licensed meets are entered onto the ASA Rankings system and can be viewed at <https://www.swimmingresults.org/individualbest/>.
- Competitions may be organised on a heat, (semi-final (fastest 16)) & final (fastest 8) or Heat Declared Winner (HDW) basis. When a HDW there will be no final and the winner of an event is determined by times alone when all the heats (for that event) have been swum.
- Bath Dolphin SC competition fixture can be found at <http://bathdolphin.co.uk/fixtures/> and is continually updated during the year.
- Hopefully this "rough guide" provides a useful overview of competitions and how they may be encountered during a swimmer's involvement in competitive swimming be it a short or lifelong one. If you have any queries please see your coach.