



Introduction

Sutton & Cheam Swimming Club is a competitive swimming club and once a swimmer becomes a member, sooner or later, they will come across opportunities to race.

Under ASA Rules, swimmers who have not yet reached their ninth birthday are only able to compete in internal events. It is likely therefore that the young swimmers first experience of competitive swimming in the club will be in one of the club's 'Splash' Galas.

Splash Galas

'Splash' Galas are impromptu galas held on Monday nights at Westcroft, and/or Wednesday nights at Cheam, where everyone in the 'D' and top Width Groups is given the opportunity to swim one length races on each of the four strokes (Freestyle, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Butterfly).

The races are informal and you don't need to enter. All the swimmers have to do is turn up. Swimmers are ranked by age, usually youngest first, and swim in mixed gender races, boys and girls in the same race.

We run 'Splash' Galas 3 or 4 times a year, firstly to give swimmers their first taste of competition, but more importantly, to spot potential talent and fast track swimmers through to the competitive squads more quickly.

ASA Competitive Performance Award

The swimmers' times are posted on the club website and give parents and swimmers an indication as to how swimmers are improving.

At this stage, after their first competitive event, it is a good idea to start keeping a note of your swimmers' Personal Best (PB) times. It is important to know what they are in order to measure improvement.

We also use the times achieved at 'Splash' Galas to award the ASA Competitive Swimming Performance Awards to swimmers achieving the required standard.

The ASA Competitive Swimming Performance Awards, sponsored by Kellogg's, are time based awards designed to motivate and reward the achievements of swimmers at any age or level. For events up to 50m, there are 3 levels of achievement – bronze, silver and gold. A Platinum award is also available at the longer distances.

Swimmers can collect badges and certificates when they have successfully achieved the required standard and only need to achieve one time for each distance to qualify for each stroke flash. Badges can be ordered directly via the ASA or through the club shop.

The Gold Standard award is approximate to average county age group qualifying times for 12 year old boys. There is therefore a good chance that swimmers achieving the 'Gold' standard would qualify at county level, though it is also very important that swimmers acquire good skills in strokes and starts, turns and finishes of the strokes. Normally, swimmers achieving the Gold standard would already have been identified and would be training in the club's competitive squads.



ASA Competitive Start Award

It is also about this time we start to introduce swimmers to the ASA Competitive Start Award. Since shallow diving can cause serious injuries if not done properly, this is a standard demanded for competitions under ASA law.

The ASA Competitive Start Award teaches safe racing starts into shallow water from a starting block, as well as a variety of starting techniques. We offer regular training so that swimmers can achieve this award and are able to use the starting blocks during competitions.

The Award is split into two parts, the Preliminary Competitive Start Award and the Competitive Start Award. Teaching for the Preliminary Competitive Start Award starts in deep water before moving to the side of the pool and shallower water. Once this award has been achieved, learners work towards the Competitive Start Award to learn safe race dives from a starting block.

Club Championships

As swimmers progress through the club, the next internal event they will come across is the Club Championships which generally take place towards the end of the year. All club members are expected to take part. For the younger swimmers this gives them a really good introduction to how competitive events are organised and the invaluable experience of swimming in such events.

Our Club Championships are effectively split into two parts.

The main Club Championships cover all the competitive strokes and distances as follows:

- 50 metres: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, Freestyle
- 100 metres: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, Freestyle, Individual Medley
- 200 metres: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, Freestyle, Individual Medley
- 400 metres: Freestyle, Individual Medley
- 800 metres: Freestyle
- 1500 metres: Freestyle

For information, the Individual Medley is an event in which the swimmers swims each stroke in a specified order – Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke and Freestyle.

These events are run as official 'licenced' events to enable swimmers to gain qualification times for the Surrey County Championships, held in February and March, and for the London Region Championships, held in May and June. These galas are swum in 25 m pools.

Clearly, some events will not be suitable for some of the younger and less experienced swimmers (although most swimmers compete in the 50m Sprint events). For swimmers in the Under 10 and Under 12 Age Groups, the club therefore holds separate Championship events run over one length for each stroke (backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle) traditionally held at Cheam or Morden.

We also hold separate galas run over 1 and 2 widths for the width group swimmers in freestyle, backstroke and breaststroke so every member of the club has the chance to race and to win club medals and trophies.

Trophies are awarded to event winners for every event (and retained until the following year), and medals are awarded to the top three swimmers in each event. Some of the club trophies have been awarded since the club was founded in 1946, and have the whole history of the club



engraved on them. It is very encouraging for young winners to have their names engraved on a trophy perhaps won in the past by some of the club's Olympians!

Because of the number of events and swimmers involved, the events take place over a number of separate galas. Swimmers are expected to stay to the end of each session they attend to watch and support their friends in the water.

Dates and details for the Club Championships are sent out well in advance. Please mark the dates in your diaries as the club expects all swimmers to compete in every event they have been entered for.

The club also awards an Age Group Trophy to the overall winner at Under 12, Under 14 and Under 16, both boys and girls. The Age Group winner is decided on a points basis with the winner of each final receiving 6 points, second 5 points, third 4 points etc. These points are then totaled to decide the Age Group winners. In this way, the more events you enter, the bigger the chance of winning the overall trophy.

If in doubt as to entering, all you need to do is speak to the coaches concerned. They will be happy to advise which events your child should enter.

Disqualifications

Inevitably, sooner or later, swimmers will be introduced to the concept of disqualification (DQ).

Like all sports, competitive swimming is governed by strict technical rules which are there to make sure that races are run completely fairly. These rules are included within the ASA Handbook which is also available on the club website.

In fact, our Club Championships are governed by the same set of rules used in the Olympic Games!

All gala officials such as referees and judges have passed examinations (both theoretical and practical) and would prefer not to disqualify, however they have to maintain standards without which some swimmers could gain an unfair advantage.

We do understand it is very upsetting to new swimmers when DQs happen, but the club has to get the swimmers used to these rules from the start. When a disqualification occurs, this is normally announced along with the reason when the result of the race is announced.

The main reasons for disqualifications are:

- A false start – there are no 2nd chances on the start. Please note a false start can consist of no more than the swimmer moving on the starting blocks once the starter has called "Take your marks"!
- Incorrect stroke technique, particularly for breaststroke and butterfly
- Incorrect touch at the turn or finish, again particularly breaststroke and butterfly when you have to touch with both hand simultaneously.
- Turning off your back to touch on your front when swimming backstroke
- Incorrect turn
- Taking a 'flyer' in a relay race i.e. diving in before the incoming swimmer has reached the end.



Sooner or later, your child will almost inevitably be disqualified. Being disqualified should be looked on as a learning experience; it is not the end of the world. It happens to everyone and even experienced swimmers are disqualified occasionally.

It is much better to be disqualified early at a club event and learn from that disqualification, than to be disqualified at a County Championship or National League event, later in a swimmer's career when it really matters.

League and Gala Fixtures

Sutton & Cheam Swimming Club basically competes in 2 types of swimming gala:-

- Team galas where the club competes as a team against other clubs
- Galas where the swimmer competes individually.

The club tries to ensure there is a varied fixture list for the whole year and this is available in the Fixtures section of the club website. The gala results and swimmers' times are also posted there as soon as they are available.

Team fixtures are swum against other clubs and as such your child will form part of a team. As a competitive swimming club, coaches assume members will be available to compete for the club if selected. Although we accept that this isn't always possible, we do expect swimmers to do their best to make themselves available when selected.

Team members are selected on merit and coaches spend many hours on team selection to try and field the best possible team combination given the type and format of the gala; it isn't always a case of just selecting the faster swimmer for each age group/stroke. Team Managers will do their best to give as much notice as possible to parents and appreciate a timely response. Learning of non-availability at the last minute, or even worse, withdrawing from the team at the last minute, lets the club and the other team members down, as it isn't always possible to arrange substitutes at very short notice.

As an example, four swimmers (both boys and girls) are normally selected for each age group, as the relays require four swimmers, one for each stroke in the medley relays and four swimmers in the freestyle relay. If a swimmer in the youngest age group were to drop out at the last minute and substitutes were not available, that team could not then compete in the relay team events and many points could be lost. With promotion and relegation at stake in the league galas, every single point counts.

In addition, as a competitive club, commitment to competing for the club is one of the main criteria for progressing through the club. Repeated refusal to compete in galas or league fixtures calls into question a swimmer's commitment, and in turn his or her place in a particular squad.

As a parent of a competitive swimmer, please therefore take a look at the fixture list and try to ensure your child is available for events they are likely to be selected for. The coaches are always available to offer advice if required.

Most team galas tend to be held fairly locally (within say a radius of 30 or so miles from our Cheam Leisure headquarters) and parents usually drive to these galas, often on a lift-sharing basis. For galas held further afield, such as the National Arena League Galas, the club may, depending on distance, organise coach transport to and from the venue. Swimmers are encouraged to use the coach as this helps team spirit and ensures the whole team arrives at the gala on time.



Team Galas

The club competes in 'Friendly' and League Galas throughout the year.

Different galas tend to have different age groups and different programmes to provide competition opportunities for all levels and all ages of competitive swimmer.

Age Groups

Age Groups can be quite confusing. Many galas for example are run with 2-year Age bands for Under 11 (U11), Under 13 (U13), Under 15 (U15) and Open Age Group swimmers. Other Galas are similarly run with 2-year age bands for Under 12 (U12), Under 14 (U 14, Under 16 (U16) and Open Swimmers, whereas other galas are run for swimmers age 9 years, Under 11 (U11), Under 12 (U12), Under 13 (U13), and Under 14 (U14) or any other combination of the same.

Age at

Another complication is that galas use different dates to determine the age of swimmers for a particular age group at the gala. Some galas are 'Age on the Day' galas, which is self-explanatory. Other galas which are run over several rounds tend to use the date of the final round of the competition to determine the age of the swimmer; whereas other galas use the end of the year (i.e. 31st December) as the relevant date.

To give an example, a swimmer who must be Under 12 on the 31st December 2013, can therefore be no older than 11 on that date and so must be born in 2002 or later. Similarly, a swimmer who must be Under 14 on the 21st September 2013, must have been born after 21st September in 2000 to be eligible to swim in that age group. It sounds complicated but you soon get used to it.

'Friendly' Galas

The club competes in 'friendly' galas by invitation from other local swimming clubs. These galas are 'fun' events providing fantastic competition for young swimmers in a relaxed atmosphere and are excellent for young swimmers perhaps swimming in their first competition.

'Speeding Ticket' Galas

Some galas have time limits where "speeding tickets" (and 0 points) are awarded if the time swum on the day is faster. It is a very difficult job for the coaches and team managers to select the most appropriate team for these events, and invariably, some swimmers go faster than their entry times suggest and get 'Speeding' tickets. However, the club coaches always encourage swimmers to go as fast as they can and Speeding Tickets should be regarded as something to strive for rather than to avoid.

League Galas

League competitions are major events with galas held all over the South of England. Competition is fierce as promotion and relegation depends upon performance at these galas.

The club currently swims in the following Leagues:



- Hants & South Coast 'Rother' League – a competition run over three rounds from April to September. The club is currently in Division 1 of the League.
 - Round 1 - U11, U13, U15, Open, individual and relay events
 - Round 2 - U12, U14, U16, Open, all relay events
 - Round 3 - U12, U14, U16, Open, individual and relay events
- Hants & South Coast Premier League - a competition now run over a single round, usually in May or June. The club is currently in Division 1 of the League.
- Hants & South Coast Junior Cup again a competition now run over a single round, this year in October. The club is currently in Division 2 of the League.
- National Arena League - run over three rounds during October, November and December each year. The club is currently in Division 2 of the National Arena (London) League.

The National Arena League

The National Arena League (formerly the National Speedo League) is the most important league fixture in the club's calendar. The National Arena League is split into 7 Regions across the country. Sutton & Cheam SC competes in the London Region, which is divided into Premier, Division 1 and Division 2 Leagues. Sutton & Cheam currently competes in Division 1. Details of the League can be found at <http://www.nationalswimmingleague.org.uk/london>

The club is very proud of its heritage being one of the founder members of the National Speedo League, and in competing every year since the League's inception in 1964.

The league fixtures take place over 3 rounds held in October, November and December.

Teams are seeded in Rounds 1 & 2 with the aim of ranking the teams such that the top final round gala comprises the 6 strongest teams fighting for promotion. The result of the final round gala determines the final position in the Division and ultimately promotion/relegation to/from a Division within the region.

Open Meets

Open Meets are essentially galas in which the swimmers are not selected as part of a team. Instead, swimmers qualify for the meet based on their Personal Best (PB) times. Although they are representing the club, they are also swimming for themselves with the aim of obtaining an improved time which would qualify them for County, Regional or National competition.

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

- Level 1 meets will have minimum standard qualifying times and are broadly aimed at swimmers aiming for National Qualifying Times (NQTs) which must be set in a Long Course (50m) pool.
- Level 2 meets take place in Short Course (25m) pools and have minimum qualifying times and may have upper limit times; these are aimed at swimmers aiming for Regional and County qualifying times (QTs).
- Level 3 meets typically have upper and lower limit qualifying times (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. These are Suitable for



obtaining QTs for County Champs and Level 3 meets. Generally Level 4 is only used for Club Championships and the club's own Championships are licenced at this level to allow times to be used for qualification to the Surrey County Championships.

Open Meets are open to anyone who meets the appropriate age and time qualifications and pay the required entry fees. The club attends various Open Meets throughout the year. These are specifically selected by the Head and Squad Coaches for a variety of reasons.

Swimmers are not recommended to attend Open Meets on their own (see Squad Support Pack for more detailed information).

Where the club supports an Open Meet there will always be a coach present on the poolside to support the swimmers and ensure they get to the right place at the right time.

Your squad coach will give you advice as to which individual events your child should enter.

Surrey County Championships

The Surrey County Championships ('The Surreys') are open to swimmers from all clubs in the county. For competition purposes the County of Surrey consists of the eleven boroughs in the administrative county of Surrey together with the London boroughs of Croydon, Southwark, Lambeth, Wandsworth, Merton, Sutton, the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames and the Royal Borough of Richmond.

As the club's headquarters are based within the London Borough of Sutton, our swimmers are eligible to compete in these Championships, which are run by the competition sub-committee of Surrey ASA (formally known as the Surrey County Water Polo and Swimming Association).

The events are held during February, March and sometimes April across various venues (Surrey Sports Park Guildford, Crystal Palace and the Guildford Spectrum), depending on the event.

Qualification times must have been achieved at a licensed meet between the end of the last championships and a specific cut-off date ahead of this year's competition. A list of the 2013 Surrey Qualifying times are available on the club website. These qualification times tend to change year on year and we will do our best to ensure they are kept up to date.

Details of the Surrey Championships can generally be found in the Age Group section on the Surrey website – see <http://www.surreyswimming.org/page.php?page=swimming>

Entry into the Surrey County Championships is coordinated by the coaches and the Competition Secretary.

London Region Championships

'The Amateur Swimming Association London Region' or 'London Swimming' is one of the 8 ASA defined regions and covers the area of Greater London; namely, the Corporation of London and the thirty two London Boroughs.

The 'Regionals' generally take place over 3 weekends in May and June and are split between the Youth Championships for the older swimmers and the Age Group Championships for the younger swimmers, the youngest age category being 10 years old.

The Qualifying times for the 'Regionals' are understandably tougher than the county championships and have to have been achieved at a Level 1,2 or 3 licenced meet since 1st October in the preceding year.



Those competing at the London Championships can post times to qualify for National events. Further details can be found on the London Swimming website see http://www.londonswimming.org/comp_aqu/competitive-swimming/

The National Championships

The 'Nationals' are the pinnacle to which every young swimmer aspires, though comparatively few swimmers (approx. 1% of the competitive swimming population) will be able to achieve the elusive NQTs required to compete in the National Championships.

The National Championships take place at Ponds Forge in Sheffield during July and August.

Qualifying times must have been achieved at a Level 1 or 2 licensed meet between 1st October and 31st May.

BAGCATs

By the time swimmers get to the stage of competing in Opens, County, Regional and hopefully the National Age Group events, they will have been introduced to the British Age Group Categories or BAGCATS.

The BAGCATS are based on the latest thinking that swimmers at an early stage of their development should compete to win an overall category award rather than specialising in a particular event. The BAGCATs therefore define four different categories of sprint, form, distance and medley and use a points system to measure and compare swimmers' performance.

- Sprint - best 50m/100m - sprint performance (i.e. 50m/100m back, breast, butterfly and freestyle) - 100m events are only swum by girls aged 11 over and boys aged 12 and over.
- Form - best form stroke performance (i.e. form strokes are those with a defined form according to ASA Law) - thus best performance at 200m backstroke, breaststroke or butterfly)
- Distance - best performance at 200m, 400m or 1500m Freestyle
- Medley - best performance at 100m, 200m or 400 Individual Medley

The sum of these scores determines the overall points and a point must be scored in each applicable category.

Borough Events

There are a number of swimming galas that are run annually by the London Borough of Sutton Swimming Association (LBSSA) or the Primary Schools Swimming Association (PSSA). Some are borough competitions whilst others are inter-borough competitions. We encourage all eligible members to compete in these events and you will see that most of them are run by our own club officials.

Junior Borough Gala

The Junior Borough Gala is aimed at children attending either a school or a club within the borough and who are in years 4, 5 and 6. It is usually held in January or February.

Children participating in this gala may then be selected by the London Borough of Sutton Primary Schools Swimming Association to represent the borough at the Surrey Schools "it's a fish out gala" which is held, in March each year. Some swimmers may also be selected to represent the borough at



the London Mini Games, which is held at Crystal Palace National Sports Centre in July each year, though this gala is not the only criteria used to select teams for either event.

Inter Borough Disability Swimming Gala

Started in 2003 the Inter Borough Disability Swimming Gala has now become a regular feature in the gala calendar. It is aimed at either disability specific schools or mainstream schools that have opportunity bases/specific units.

It is open to disabled children who are in school years 7 to 13. The galas produce the opportunity for schools from Sutton to participate as well as schools from Croydon, Merton and from Surrey & Kent. Over one hundred and fifty children take part with the majority winning medals or achieving personal best times.

The children who win or come second/third in their events are then selected (eligibility allowing), to represent the borough at the London Youth Games Disability Gala held at The Beckenham Spa.

London Borough of Sutton Primary Schools Swimming Association Gala

There are two galas aimed at children attending school within the borough who are in years 4, 5 and 6. This is an event for school teams but as most of our swimmers live and go to school locally, many of our swimmers will be swimming for their school teams in this exciting event.

A maximum of 12 schools (per gala) can enter and races are held in all four strokes. winners are presented with medals and a trophy is presented to the school finishing with the highest overall score.

London Youth Games Disability Swimming Gala

This is an inter borough competition aimed at children in years 7 to 13 attending school within the borough. Selection is based on results from the Inter Borough Disability Swimming Gala, held earlier in the year.

London Mini Games Swimming Gala

This is an inter borough competition aimed at children in years 5 and 6 attending school within the borough. Selection is primarily based on results from the Junior Borough Gala, which is held in the last week January/first week of February each year and from times submitted from swims in recognised meets in the 3-month period preceding the gala.

London Youth Games Swimming Gala

This is an inter borough competition aimed at children in years 7 to 12 who either live or attend school within the borough. Selection is based on times submitted from swims in recognised meets in the 3-month period preceding the gala.

Senior Borough Gala

This is a gala aimed at children attending either a senior school or a club within the borough and who are in years seven and upwards. The event usually takes place round the middle of November each year. Winners may be selected to represent the borough at the London Youth Games, which is held at Crystal Palace National Sports Centre in July each year.