

## You're going to a gala?

Attending a gala for the first time can be a daunting experience for both swimmer and parent. The tips and hints below should help to make that first gala a positive and successful one.



## What to bring?

It is a good idea to pack your bags the night before, with everything you might need. Here is a checklist, which should be useful to you (No glass bottles or any other breakable items). Wear warm comfy clothes for your journey.

Swimmers should have everything they need for the session in a bag on poolside with them

- At least 2 swimming costumes
- 2 towels
- A Club hat (plus a spare one)
- Goggles (plus a spare pair) – check they fit well and are really tight
- Pool/Deck shoes
- A Club top (if you have one), shorts/tracksuit to keep you warm
- Enough food (easily digestible) to last the day including snacks to graze on in between swims.
- Suggested food - pasta/rice, bread, pitta, bagels or muffins, rice cakes, popcorn, bananas and breakfast/cereal bars
- Sufficient drinks (1-2 litres) preferably water or diluted squash no fizzy drinks
- Entertainment (for open meets only) - Music/iPod, books, games to help pass the time
- Money in case of emergency

Please ensure all belongings are clearly labelled. Swimmers are responsible for any valuables that they bring poolside.

## Arrival at the swimming pool.

- Please ensure you arrive in plenty of time (at least 20 mins prior to warm-up)
- Report to the Coach or Team manager
- Sign-in / Register - It is the swimmer's responsibility to sign-in. Failure to sign-in may result in you not being allowed to swim.
- Familiarise yourself with the pool layout (toilets, marshalling area etc), change ready for warm-up and join the team poolside.

## Who's who?

- At any gala, there should be 1-2 coaches and 1-2 team managers.
- The coach will brief swimmers before their race, watch the race, record splits when necessary and give swimmers feedback after the race.
- The team manager will advise swimmers when to warm-up, go to marshalling, warm down and eat. Any concerns or problems please come and ask.

## Warm-up

Check which warm-up lane is yours and be on time for it - swimmers should stay in the lane allocated. Your coach will tell you what warm up to do. Use the warm-up wisely (focus on stroke technique and practice turns). Don't stop to talk to your friends, you will have plenty of time to do this throughout the day.



## Where should you be?

Swimmers are expected to sit with the team – sometimes this will not be with parents in a separate spectator area. Please don't wander off without speaking to the team manager first - please ask before going to the toilet or changing rooms. When you are at a swimming gala and with an appointed coach/team manager, they are responsible for you and you must not leave the building without permission. If your parents are there, please ask the coach for permission to leave the building with them. After your last race in a session, you may be given permission to go join your parents and take a break.

## How do I know if I'm a winner?

A lot of Open Meets have Heat Declared Winners (HDW) and in this case Age Group wins are based on times, not position in each race. (This will all be explained in Meet Packs).

## Good behaviour

When you are representing your club you are expected to behave properly. Please make sure you are familiar with the code of conduct - this applies to all the representatives of the club - swimmers, volunteers and parents.

## Good luck

Remember galas are fun, cheer on your team, and enjoy yourself.

## Tips for parents

- If your child is ill and unable to attend, please let the coach know in plenty of time especially for team galas where a replacement swimmer may need to be called up
- Arrive in plenty of time, it is important for your child to have a warm-up
- Parents aren't allowed on poolside at any time during a competition
- Spectator areas are hot so wear appropriate clothes (layers are good!)
- Be prepared and bring a drink (in case the machines are out of order)
- Most galas have a raffle
- Try to sit with other Brecon Swim Club parents, a friendly bunch happy to answer any of your queries
- A pen, paper and highlighter are a must to help you keep track of your child's swims and a stopwatch if you're very enthusiastic. It is a good idea to keep a note of your child's times for future reference as this is a good way of showing your child's progress.
- Get behind the team, don't be afraid to cheer and enjoy it.

Please remember that competitive swimming is tough and your child won't PB every time.

It's your job to encourage and support – don't chastise your child for not doing as well as you would like or expect. It is the Coach's job to point out where a swimmer could have done better and to ensure your child gets the maximum learning out of a race.



## GLOSSARY

**PB** A PB is a PERSONAL BEST time for a specific distance and stroke and it is a better measure of achievement than where a swimmer finishes in a race.

**UCT.** Age Group races have an UPPER CUT OFF TIME. This means that anyone who has reached this time during a previous meet will not be able to swim until they move up to the next age group.

**AGE GROUP (AG).** Meets can be organised into Age Groups usually starting at 8 years. Some events are only open to swimmers of a specified age. The age of swimmers can be determined in 2 ways:

1. Age at 31<sup>st</sup> December of the event year
2. Age on the day of the event

**SPEEDING TICKET.** Not always a bad thing! Swimmers will be given a speeding ticket if they finish the race in a time above the UCT for their age. The good news is that the swimmer is obviously improving and doing really well. The sad news is that they will not be included in any awards for this meet and must wait to reach the next age group before competing in the same event (see UCT above).

**OVER THE TOP STARTS.** To get through a busy meet programme, events need to move quickly one after the other with minimum delay. Swimmers prepare to start while an event is in progress and when the last swimmer finishes, everyone stays in the water and the new event swimmers start by diving "over the top" of swimmers in the water. The previous event swimmers will then be instructed to exit the pool, ducking under lane ropes to exit via the ladders at the side. Not used for backstroke!

**DISQUALIFICATION (DQ)** When a swimmer during a race does, or doesn't do, something specified in FINA rules, as observed by an Official. This is often due to incorrect turns and finishes, but may also include incorrect stroke technique. No time will be recorded in the results. Coaches are able to find out what the error was and work on the problem so that it does not happen again!.