**Open Meets and Galas – what’s the** **difference**?

An Open Meet is where the swimmer decides what events to enter. Typically, the cost is £5 - £7 per event and they are usually held over a weekend. Spectators also pay to watch the races. The Club will promote certain Open Events throughout the year and enter these as a Club. Swimmers can also enter Open Meets directly, but a member of the Coaching team will not attend these meets.

Galas are where swimmers are selected to represent the Club. The Head Coach and Assistant Head Coach decide who is swimming which events – this may be an individual event or a relay. There is no charge for swimming, but spectators will be charged admission. These usually take place on Saturday Afternoon/Evenings. Swimmers are expected to stay at a Gala until the end to cheer on their team mates – this is a very important part of being selected for the Team.

**Open Meet Levels explained**

Open meets are divided into ‘licensed’, and ‘unlicensed’. This distinction refers to whether the meet has a licence from Swim England (SE), who impose certain conditions for a meet to be licensed such as the requirement for officials to be qualified.

With ‘unlicensed’ meets there are normally no qualifying times – but the times achieved in the meet then aren’t entered on to the British Swimming Rankings.

The ‘licensed’ meets fall into 4 classes –

Level 1 meets are held in 50m pools and will expect entry times to be converted to an equivalent 50m pool time if set in a 25m pool. Times recorded can be used as entry times for National & Regional Championships. Qualifying times will be used.

Level 2 meets are held in 25m pools, so you need to provide times for 25m (you may need to convert from 50m pool times). Times recorded can be used as entry times for National & Regional Championships. Qualifying times will be used.

Level 3 meets can be held in 25m or 50m pools. Times recorded can be used for County or District qualification (and Level 1 & 2 meets). Qualifying times will be used plus ‘upper limit’ times (‘not faster than’). The majority of meets that LTSC compete at are Level 3 meets.

Level 4 open meets are relatively uncommon and usually refer to meets for just one Club e.g. club championships. LTSC Annual Gala, Sprint Gala and Distance Gala are all Level 4 competitions so that times will appear on British Swimming Rankings.

Meets held in 50m pools are usually called ‘Long Course’ (LC) meets, and 25m pools ‘Short Course’ (SC) meets.

The qualifying times for licensed meets reflect the different standards (fast for Level 1 and 2, not so fast for Level 3), and Level 3 meets will also have a ‘not faster’ than time. Some meets will issue ‘speeding tickets’ if you are too fast.

National qualifying times are accepted from meets licensed at level 1 & 2 (depending on whether National event is LC or SC).

Regional qualifying times are accepted from meets licensed at level 1, 2 & 3. County qualifying times are accepted from meets licensed at level 1, 2, 3 & 4.

**First Come First Served Meets**

These meets will accept entries until they are full. Therefore, the deadline for getting your entries in can seem very tight and often several months before the Open Meet. Usually an entire club is either accepted or rejected rather than individual swimmers.

Other Open Meets will accept entries until their closing date. If they are then oversubscribed, they will reject (or scratch) some swimmers from the programme. It is usually the slowest swimmers for an event (within each age group) that are scratched, so it is worth carefully selecting events for such meets as you may end up with only 1 swim per session.

**Qualifying Times**

Depending on the level of the Open Meet there will be different qualifying criteria. It is the responsibility of the swimmer to ensure correct times are noted on the entry form. Many open meets now insist that times come from Licensed Meets (and are on the British Swimming Rankings database). They may also need to be swum within a certain time frame. Times from most Galas will not appear on the British Swimming Rankings website – it is the responsibility of the swimmer to maintain a record of their times from a Gala.

No Faster Than (NFT) Some open meets set ‘No Faster Than’ times for entry. This means that the time entered cannot be faster than the time being entered. Entries exceeding this time will be rejected.

Upper / Lower Qualifying Times The entry time must fall within the time bad specified. Entries outside of this will be rejected. No Time Entries Unless specified, L3 meets and above will not accept

No Time entries. There are very few open meets that accept No Time entries, so it is important to take advantage of these when you start swimming competitively otherwise the number of events a swimmer can enter during the season will be limited. LTSC Annual Gala, Sprint and Distance meets are a great way of getting times and are licensed so the times will appear on the British Swimming Rankings database and can be used for entry into Open Meets and County Championships.

**Galas**

LTSC also competes in several galas – including the Leicestershire Diddy League and the Nottinghamshire Sports League. Swimmers are selected by the Head Coach and will receive an invite via email. If you receive an invitation to represent the Club in a gala, please respond as soon as possible. If you are unable to swim another swimmer will need to be selected.

Unlike Open Meets, swimmers do not decide what they are swimming; this is decided by the Head Coach. There are usually relays and a swimmer may be invited to a Gala as part of the relay team and may not get an individual swim. The swimmer will not know the event that they are swimming until the evening of the gala.

The selection criteria for offering swimmers the opportunity to represent LTSC in a gala or relay event are: -

* Commitment to the Club
* Commitment to training
* Positive attitude and good behaviour
* Supportiveness of the club
* Team player
* Mutual support and encouragement of team mates
* Performance / Form /Rankings / Team statistics (please see below)
* Previous results
* Overall form
* Availability and reliability
* Coaches’ choice and discretion, based on the combination of the above

The team will be selected based on times on Rankings (supported by times achieved at galas not on Rankings for example, in Diddy League, times swam in a previous round). The team needs to be selected considering the events in the competition. Medley Relay teams (four swimmers – swimming backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle) require selection that offers the strongest combination of swimmers.

Please note that different galas will have different rules and ‘age as at dates’. For example, the Diddy League for 2018 is based on the swimmers age as at 30th June – this means that if a child is born on 29th June 2008 they will swim in the 10 years age group, however if the swimmer’s birthday is 1st July 2008 they will swim in the 9 years age group. For the Nottinghamshire Sports League, the relay teams are based on combined age groups – so the 13 years age group relay will be made up of two swimmers from the 11 years age group and two from the 13 years age group. These are just two examples of how rules can differ between competitions.

Occasionally, selected swimmers are unable to attend a specific event, in which case, the club would offer their place to an alternative swimmer, based on the above criteria.