

What it takes to be a Dronfield Dolphin

Dronfield Dolphins is a competitive swimming club, and as such swimmers are expected to train for, and participate in competition.

To swim for Dronfield Dolphins requires a large commitment. Our coaches, committee and helpers give a vast amount of time to ensure that the swimmers receive the best coaching and support that is available. Dronfield Dolphins expects that commitment to be matched if not exceeded by the all the swimmers.

Be under no illusion, swimming is hard work. Not only for the swimmers and coaches but also for the parents, and the more proficient a swimmer, the heavier the time commitment for everyone.

Competitive Swimming

Team Galas

The Club competes in the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Diddy League for swimmers in the 9 – 12 age groups. There are three galas in this series, which takes place from April to June and the club competes against other clubs in the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire areas.

The Club also competes in the West Midlands region of National Speedo League which has three galas between October and December.

In addition, we enter teams in local 'friendly' and novice galas throughout the year for all age groups. Depending on the gala there can be any combination of ages from 9 year old to Open (16 and above) age group.

In novice galas our aim is to expose the lesser experienced swimmers to gala conditions before they are thrown into a competitive league or 'Open' gala.

In both friendly and league team galas the criteria for selection is on speed, strength of stroke and a commitment to swimming. Dronfield Dolphins competes to win - we are a competitive club, and it should be every swimmers aim to be selected to represent the club.

Teams are selected by the coaching staff, with co-operation and consultation from the team managers. The Team managers are responsible for the team on gala day.

We try to inform swimmers as soon as possible that they have been chosen to represent the club, which is usually at least two weeks before a gala.

When a swimmer is chosen to swim for the club, it is the responsibility of the swimmer to confirm their availability with the Team Manager. If transport is being arranged for the gala then the Team Manager needs to know as soon as possible so that they know how many spaces are required.

If swimmers do not turn up for a gala or do not inform the team manager in sufficient time then this could well affect their selection for future galas. It is very difficult to find a substitute swimmer at short notice; and one person missing could mean that a relay team cannot swim, thus denying the team of valuable points.

Personal Bests

In order to maintain up-to-date Personal Best (PB's) times for each swimmer the club periodically holds 'Badge Nights'. These however are a very time consuming part of any club training programme, and whilst the club endeavours to hold as many of these as possible, the best ways for swimmers to have their PB's updated is by entering 'Open' Galas.

The Open Gala and Records officer keeps the PB list, which is published on the website and the notice board and is emailed out to all swimmers when it is updated. These times are collected from time trials, friendly galas, league galas and open competitions. It is this PB list that the Coaches and Team Managers refer to when they are selecting teams for galas. So the more recent the PB's, the more chance the swimmer has of being chosen to swim for the club.

It is expected that all squad swimmers enter the annual Club Championships held in January. This is our own internal gala, and whilst it is a competitive event it is more relaxed than any of the other galas and excellent fun.

Swimmers are also encouraged to enter the Derbyshire County Championships held in March and the County Sprint (50 metre pool) Competition held in November.

Open Galas

At Open Galas, not only are the swimmers representing the club, but they are also swimming for themselves in order and to win trophies, medals, certificates and to achieve new PB's

Open Galas have different levels, or grades. A true 'Open' or 'A' grade event is open to swimmers of any ability; however the majority of these events have minimum qualifying times which need to have been achieved. 'B' grade events usually have not only a minimum qualifying standard, but also exclude the fastest swimmers by using a 'cut-off time'. Any swimmer swimming faster than this time is awarded a 'Speeding Ticket'. Speeding Tickets are a reward for showing improvement over and above the level of the competition, and although the swimmer is excluded from a winning a 'place prize' their PB obviously stands. 'C' grade events have the same format as 'B' grade events but the lower qualification requirements make them ideal for younger swimmers, or for 'B' grade swimmers with 'inconvenient birthdays'. These qualifying and cut-off times are never the same for any two galas and are generally set by the host club.

The majority of galas are 'age on day' and so the swimmers birthday becomes a factor when choosing the most suitable galas to enter.

The club regularly sends swimmers to approximately 15 open galas of differing grades throughout year, with the majority of these being within easy travelling distance.

Because of the number of open galas that our swimmers can enter, Club coaches do not generally attend open galas. The management of our swimmers on the poolside at these events is undertaken by swimmers parents. Although this may appear a daunting task it is good fun and is considerably more comfortable and certainly less tedious than sitting in a hot spectator's gallery on uncomfortable seats! Any parent asked to help out the poolside will be asked to attend a briefing outlining poolside responsibilities and duties. This briefing will be given by an experienced poolside helper from within the club. We would also ask that a CRB check is completed in due course.

If you have any queries regarding which open galas would be best suited to your abilities then do not hesitate to ask.

It is important that gala dates are noted by swimmers and parents, as these dates can be as far as 6 months in the future! Places at the most popular galas are filled very quickly and details of all galas can be found on the club website www.dronfield-dolphins.co.uk. and on the club notice board at Dronfield Sports Centre.