

## Leeds City Council Swim Training Scheme

### Squad Membership And Promotion (Draft correct at 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009)

#### Explanatory Notes

The Leeds City Council Swimming Training Scheme (STS) is designed with the Long Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD) in mind. The model has been developed by some of the leading scholars and practitioners in sport and is endorsed by British Swimming and the Amateur Swimming Association. It serves to provide guidelines for coaches and other sports professionals in terms of the content, quantity and quality of training necessary to maintain the progress of athletes at every stage of their participation in their sport, from those at the grass roots level to those who aspire to compete on the international stage.

However, they are guidelines and as such the model also recognises that amongst a normal swimming club population there will be a fairly broad variation in age, physical strengths and weaknesses, motivation, inherent skill and future potential that will go a long way to determine the position an individual will occupy on the STS.

Consequently, when we consider the demands of the day to day training regime, depending on the level at which you take part, there are a number of variables we need to consider that will have an impact on the success or otherwise of both the individual concerned and the STS as a whole, and they can be best explained under the following headings.

#### **a) Competition Performance**

Racing performance is very often the benchmark applied by many swimmers and their parents when making judgements with respect to promotion and membership of a particular squad, and at face value this is understandable. But what seems the most obvious means of assessing a swimmer's suitability for promotion or membership is not necessarily the most important, particularly at the early stages of development. For instance, some very naturally gifted swimmers are able to swim very fast in competition, but do not necessarily cope with the physical demands of the relative training regime on a daily basis.

Having said all this, we do recognise the motivational value in setting out some objective training and competitive performance standards for the swimmers to aspire to and achieve. The Squad Membership Performance Standards therefore, are a series of criteria that when achieved, qualify you for **consideration** for membership of the STS or for promotion to the next level. When all things are equal, in the majority of cases promotion or membership will almost certainly be achieved, but it does not give you automatic qualification.

#### **b) Training Performance**

Training performance is paramount when considering swimmers for promotion. The coaches have to be satisfied that the swimmers have the necessary skills, physical strength, application and resolve to benefit from joining the next stage of the scheme and to be able to cope with the increase in demand. Promoting a swimmer when they are not ready or equipped for the demand can have a negative effect on performance and their motivation.

#### **c) Maturational Age v Chronological Age**

We have all observed instances where a swimmer may well be ahead of their peers in terms of their maturational (physical) age, and whilst both their racing performance and their ability to cope with the training demands are in advance of their peers, their long term development may not be best served by promoting them too early. There will always be swimmers who are in advance of their peers physically or in terms of racing performance but their social and emotional development will be quite normal for their age and from this perspective it is important that they are able to continue to engage and mix with swimmers of their own peer group and take part at a level they are comfortable with.

There may also be instances however, where we provide the opportunity for younger swimmers to be promoted ahead of older swimmers in their squad if we believe it would be in their interest and they show particular ability and potential. This is not a reflection on the older swimmers, but a recognition that all swimmers develop at different rates and to different degrees.

#### **d) Developmental Age**

Developmental age refers to the amount and length of time a particular swimmer has spent involved in regular and structured swimming programmes. For instance, a 7 year old child who started swimming lessons regularly at the age of 3 may well be ahead of a child of 9 developmentally in terms of their level of skill, technique and conditioning who perhaps only became involved in swimming at the age of 7. Again, this is not a reflection on the potential of the older swimmer but recognition that they might each reach their full potential at a different times.

#### **e) Emotional Age**

Whilst some swimmers may well be physically capable of taking part in what is quite often a very challenging training regime, being a successful athlete also requires an extraordinary and increasing level of self discipline, application and resolve as they progress through the STS. We have to be fairly certain therefore, that swimmers have the level of maturity in this respect for their participation to be a rewarding and successful one for both themselves and for the other members of the squad.

#### **f) Aptitude and Potential**

The coaching staff at the Leeds City Council STS between them have a wealth of experience and knowledge in the sport of swimming cultivated over many years of coaching at every level of the sport. This gives them a unique appreciation of the aptitude and potential of swimmers that is based not only the variables explained here, but on their personal observations and instincts. From time to time therefore, there may be swimmers fast tracked in spite of the normal promotions protocol and to the lay person or their fellow squad members, this may appear somewhat partial and unfair. However, in the best interest of the individuals this may concern, we reserve the right to apply this provision.

#### **g) A Good Attitude**

A good attitude can be a difficult concept to articulate, particularly to those unfamiliar with a sports training environment, but it is nonetheless a characteristic common to all accomplished sportsmen and sportswomen. It tends to embrace concepts such as a positive outlook, an eager and energetic approach to training, a sound work ethic, good timekeeping, fair play, team work and a willingness to cooperate and engage with their team mates and the coaching staff.

Whilst it is highly unlikely that we will make judgements about the attitude of some of our youngest squad members when considering promotion, particularly as it is part of our responsibility to nurture and encourage a positive attitude towards their sport and the training programme, it will become an increasingly important consideration as they progress through the STS.

#### **Optimum Age Limits**

One of the guiding principles of the LTAD model is that it identifies the chronological age at which the swimmers achieve optimum progress through each stage of the programme. For instance "Swimskills", the second stage of the LTAD model, is reflected in our Competition Squads and needs to be embraced between the ages of approximately 8-12 years, after which time they should be moving on to the "Training to Train" stage in order to continue to make progress. Remaining at the SwimSkills stage beyond the upper recommended age limit is unlikely to promote optimum improvement and progress will be difficult to achieve. Just as skipping this stage or failing to complete it adequately will have the same effect on future potential.

The Leeds City Council Training Scheme is structured in such a way that each level of the LTAD is catered for and the membership of the squads reflects this in terms of the variables explained previously.

The scheme is also designed to be progressive where the standards, level of commitment and the demands of the training programme increases at every stage. Consequently, there may come a point when some of you reach the upper age limit of the squad but fall short of the qualifying standards or decide not to accept

the offer of promotion, and depending on the pressure the scheme experiences in finding places for new swimmers, you may be required to relinquish your place in order to make way for others.

This principle will apply at every level of the scheme and is necessary for us to manage the programme effectively and to continue to promote success.

### **Training Attendance**

There is no doubt that the most influential variable on performance is attendance at workouts. It has been accepted for a long time that there is a high correlation between good swimming performance and a consistently high level of attendance at all prescribed training sessions.

The LTAD model provides guidelines in terms of the required frequency (number each week) and duration of workouts recommended to fulfil the potential of the athlete at every stage of their development, and the guidelines are reflected in the resources made available to the swimmers at every level of the STS.

With finite resources at our disposal however, we are not always able to provide an excess of resource that allows swimmers to be selective or flexible in the workouts they attend whilst fulfilling the requirements of the Squad Membership Standards, and whilst we recognise that it is inevitable that swimmers may on occasion miss workouts for one reason or another, our position is that everyone on the STS must be aiming for 100% attendance of the workouts prescribed.

In terms of what is considered to be an *acceptable* level of attendance in the context of your squad membership or promotion, this will depend very much on the individual concerned and the level at which you take part in the STS. For instance, new swimmers to a squad may be given a period of transition before they are required to attend the full compliment of training sessions.

Should the attendance fall below the threshold for what is considered acceptable, the swimmers will find themselves challenged and at the same time encouraged to improve in order to retain their place on the STS.

### **The Competition Programme**

Competing for The City of Leeds Swimming Club is fundamental to belonging to the STS. Each level of the STS has a well planned and progressive competition programme providing opportunities for swimmers to compete in a variety of events throughout the season. All swimmers are required to support the competition programme to the satisfaction of the coaching staff as a condition of membership of the club and the STS.

### **Age Groups**

The age for meeting the Squad Membership Performance Standards will be the age in which you compete at the forthcoming North East Regional Age Championships (June) or the North East Regional Youth & Senior Championships (May) of any particular season.

### **Promotions Schedule**

Promotions will be considered three times each season in September, January and April. However, in some circumstances promotions may take place at other times during the season at the discretion of the Chief Swimming Coach.

### **Conversions**

All qualifying times quoted are based on performances in a long course (50m) pool and only performances that appear on the City of Leeds Swimming Club ranking lists will be considered. However, conversions from short course (25m) performances will be accepted using only the ASA Comparative Tables. For your information the ASA Comparative Table can be accessed via the British Swimming website at [www.britishswimming.org](http://www.britishswimming.org)