

TEAM SELECTION

Further to the minutes from the April meeting, I thought it would be both useful to both the committee and parents alike to explain in more detail the complexities of team selection. As I have spent many years with Evesham Swimming Club and spent the last 9 years being part of the committee of ESC, selecting teams for both Evesham Swimming Club and Worcester County Swimming Association, coaching and teaching swimmers (young and old), as well as being a parent of a swimmer, I hope my input may be both valuable and of interest.

The selection of a team for any competitive club is both extremely difficult and unenviable, notwithstanding the amount of time and consideration put in by the coaches selecting the team.

Realistically a team selection is not going to please everyone however the selectors have to ensure that we field the best possible team for that particular event/gala. Not every gala would it be appropriate to select our fastest combination of swimmers, however in a series of meets such as a league selection, this would be the wisest thing to do as it has a knock on effect on our position within the division and thus our reputation as an ever improving club and one that would wish to attract our little swimmers of the future, and of course, subsequent revenue to ensure we continue to be a viable club.

The only people suited to this unenviable job are the coaches who have both the knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of each individual swimmer and how they would or would not fit into the team structure. Within every competitive club, and over each age group, male and female, there are children who for a variety of reasons are the “winners” in every stroke/distance. This may be due to the fact they physically develop early, put in twice the amount of training than other children, or in a few cases are exceptionally talented, the latter being very rare!

In a team selection the exceptional swimmer becomes part of the “Team” and he or she is unable to swim every event. In leagues such as the Nuneaton there are strict rules that the selectors must adhere to, about how many swims each child can have and at what age they can compete and in what races. (Nationally this is reflected as children are not allowed to compete in the National Championships until they are 10 and even then are limited to what distances they can compete in), this is due to our ever increasing knowledge about sports science and especially with regards to the physical development of young children).

The team for ESC Nuneaton League is selected mainly on times. The only way the children can be up for selection is to train regularly, listening carefully to the coaches for advice on how to improve their techniques etc. And, very importantly, attend any intra-club galas/Summer Champs/Winter Champs competitions that the club holds. This is our indicator as to how the children are improving. Sadly, some swimmers seem unable to attend these galas and we, as coaches, have no indicator as to their times and thus are unable to use them in such league swims.

As we do not run regular time trials within the club structure at present (due to limited pool time and coaches) we have to rely upon the last couple of time trials/galas the children swam in for times.

Any child swimming in an open meet is also welcome to submit their times to me for consideration (with supporting evidence i.e. results sheets). Split times (for relays) are taken during galas and used for comparison (however I must state that split times are not exact, i.e. the first swimmer's time is likely to be slower than the others, swimming from the gun, but they are useful as a general comparison.

On the odd occasion a child may be selected who perhaps may not appear to be the fastest, but one has to take into consideration the different strokes that are swam in different combinations and also we, at ESC, try to ensure the children aren't over-swum or put into competitive situations they (as individuals) would be unable to cope with.

Whilst, I personally have over the last 9 years been involved with selecting teams for different leagues, and study the times from previous galas at great length in order to determine the best possible combination for our club, I have on all occasions taken advice from the other coaches should any child/race be in question. Elaine, Phyl and Jill B have all been consulted during the last two rounds of the Nuneaton League.

As a club in previous years we have often competed in different leagues and friendly galas for which the criteria of the team selection has been different. Due to a variety of reasons we haven't entered many friendly galas during the last year or two and this is something we could consider and develop further, perhaps even entering another junior league.

Each gala is looked at on an individual basis and each child is given the same opportunity to improve and be selected to represent their club. As a coach (and I know I speak for my colleagues too) our time is given freely and willingly, both to coach, and take teams to compete (often for days at a time). Our "payment" comes from seeing the children grow and improve, not only their swimming skills, but also their confidence in social situations. The children benefit enormously from being involved in a club type environment, the lessons learnt are taken with them throughout life and as a club we have always been regarded as a friendly club concerned with the childrens' welfare. Each child is equally important to the coaches and their progress of equal interest to each and every one of us.

I hope the above explains in a little more detail the complexities of selecting a team.

Carole-Anne