

## HADEN HILL SWIMMING CLUB

### COMPETITION AND MANAGEMENT OF THAT COMPETITION

This is the time of year when we as a competitive club have to face the reality of our attempt to provide *Competition for All*. At the younger end of the age groups there has been a heavy involvement with teaching and the refinement of strokes, a pre-requisite of being able to move easily through water on a number of strokes. All this work has seen parents using a lot of energy, time and commitment to get to the next step of measuring how quickly and competently a child swims in water. There will have been the opportunities to show competence on badge nights and time trials but the real excitement comes when parents see their swimmer competing directly against other swimmers on selected strokes at something like Club Championships. This is often the first competition like setting for the family and nerves often jangle, as preparation is made for this swim off against others in the teaching group or “new to you” swimmers of the same age group who have been swimming in another part of the Club. This is the sharp end of swimming in that it is possibly the first time that the family have seen a competitive pool with lanes and “new to you” people issuing instructions on the poolside. Swimmers have to adapt to this setting and adjust and manage the child’s perception of the pool and then having seen their swimmer compete face the reality of their swimmer’s ability, competence and enjoyment in competing.

In the lead up to this swim it could be helpful if:

- You talk about the swim or swims but do that encouragingly which will give the swimmer confidence
- Make sure the swimmer has all the gear to include spare trunks, goggles, towels and warm clothing. Often forgotten are trainers to keep feet dry and these should be different from the ones used outside walking to the pool. Essentially keep your swimmer warm and dry.
- Prepare the swimmer to take instructions from someone else and not from you, as you are an observer and supporter on the day. The parental place is to be a supporter and encourager ready to show and give praise when the swim has been completed. Remember praise in whatever form has been shown to be the most effective reinforcing agent. Do avoid waving the offer of money at the child for successful completion of a task. If rewards are to be used think carefully what you are using and what are the implications. Basically enjoy competing and use one experience to try another.
- Prepare yourself for success or possibly failure. If it is the former great share your satisfaction and joy. If it is the latter it may be best to let a coach or teacher take a share of the pressure and find enough good in the swim to encourage further participation
- If there is a disqualification involved remember this only happens when the rules of the sport have been broken and no matter how much disappointment this brings the decision cannot and will not be changed. Prepare yourself by being prepared to put to one side your anger and disappointment. Do not seek out poolside officials or helpers to satisfy your questioning. Reflect on the outcome, get the coach to find out the reason for disqualification, and discuss this together so that the fault is known and the work that is going to be put in to remedy the error or errors is clear. This may not be possible on the day of competition so agree a time

and place for discussion and clarification. That approach will make Club Championships a useful learning experience offering hope and guidance for on- going participation.

Remember in Club Championships there is often the full range of ability being displayed by swimmers of different ages and observation of these swimmers should offer a perfect learning experience for the younger swimmers. The swimmers from the training squads should demonstrate:

- ✓ Poolside manners which respect the rights of others and acknowledges the pool has to be managed and volunteers who have given up their time are not there to be argued with.
- ✓ A discipline which helps poolside stewards ensure there is continuity in the programme and one that runs to time.
- ✓ Observe the instructions of the referee and acknowledge that all poolside decisions are final and in the in interest of fair play and the Rules of the sport
- ✓ The ability to complete entry forms and return any cards relevant to the competition on the day.
- ✓ That they are there to compete and to do this they present themselves with the appropriate gear and ensure they stay warm and dry to maximise their performance on the day
- ✓ The ability to get on with the business of competition without over reliance on parental intervention.
- ✓ The ability to compete by making use of the work done in training sessions.
- ✓ Their readiness to compete against swimmers of similar ability irrespective of age in “closed” competition and use the results to give access to “open” competition. "Closed " competition is a competition which is only available to members of certain categories i.e. in the case of our Club Championships members of Haden Hill. “Open” competition is exactly what it says, a competition that is open to anyone who is a swimming member of an asa club.
- ✓ Respect for any decisions that are taken on the day. These decisions will have been taken in the interests of gala management but with due regard to asa law. The decisions are final and are not to be the subject of poolside confrontation.

The difficulty with Club Championship Competitions is that they are highly personalised where individuals are seeking to enhance their standing within the Club or sometimes unfortunately prove a point. They offer the opportunity for everyone to shout for their own or their friends but do remember that that can be divisive and afterwards we have all to come together to present the face and the competitive force of Haden Hill. So team swimming is a totally different experience it is a time where we swim one for all and all for one to maximise our team outcomes. Enjoy your swimming and make the most of individual and team swimming. Respect for each other and the part we play in the process is the safe and honest way to enhance our experience, our reputation and performance outcomes of individuals and the Club.

Respect for each other is the safe and honest way forward and remember that all experiences are learning experiences and before us we have children and young people looking for and expecting sound adult models. Make sure we give it them in a positive and useful way.