



Parents' Guide to Arena League

The Arena League (formerly Speedo League) is run in seven regions across the country. Guildford competes in the South Region. The region is split into divisions – the Premier Division covers the whole region, then lower Division One and Two are both split geographically between East & West. There are usually 18 teams in the Premier Division and varying numbers in the lower divisions.

Guildford City SC currently has both their A & B Teams in the Premier Division (South).

The Qualifying Rounds

There are three rounds held simultaneously at pools around the country, one in October, November & December. The galas swum in October & November are qualifying rounds for the December regional finals with teams within each Division competing against each other – the draw for these rounds is done in advance. The teams for the final galas in December are seeded based on the points scored in the initial two rounds. These final galas are crucial as there are double points on offer and they decide promotions/relegations between the Divisions.

All the galas are held at 25m pools at pools across the region, except the December Regional Final for the top Premier Division teams which is held in a long course (50m) pool, normally at the K2 pool in Crawley.

The team with most points after the Top Premier Division Regional Final automatically qualifies for the 'A' National Final, normally held in Sheffield on a Sunday afternoon in April. Depending on results from the other regions one or more runners up after the Regional Final may also qualify for the 'A' final or for the 'B' final held the same day in Sheffield. There are 10 teams in each of the 'A' and 'B' finals from across the 7 regions.

The other finals from the Premier Division, Division One and Two finals are used to decide the promotions and relegations between the divisions.

Swimmer Selection

Swimmers will be selected by the GCSC coaches to swim in the A and B Team. Notification of selection will be by email and the team list will also be on the website. There are no entry fees or forms to fill in. If you are unable to compete for any reason you **MUST** notify Richard **IMMEDIATELY**. Not participating in a Gala for which your swimmer has been chosen may jeopardise their squad place.

The age groups are determined as age on the 31st December. The age groups are 9-11, 13 and under, 15 and under, and Open. The age for the Cup Final in April is also based on their age at 31st December the previous year.

The Galas

For the youngest age group the individual races are 50m for each stroke, a 4x50m Medley relay, a 4x50m Freestyle relay.

The other age groups swim 100m for the individual events but the relays are still 4x50m, with the Open age group being an exciting 6x50m.

Swimmers may swim up an age group but may not swim down. Each swimmer may swim a maximum of 3 individual swims, 2 in their own age group, and any number of relay swims. 9 year olds can compete in the relays but not individual swims. Each gala lasts around 2 ½ hours with 51 races.

On The Night

Club transport is normally not provided to local venues so you may want to share lifts or ask someone else to transport your swimmer if you cannot take them. Arrive at the host pool at the time requested on the board/sheet. The requested arrival time allows for confirmation of arrival to the Coach, changing and warm up but getting there late will worry the Coach who at some point will have to reallocate your swimmers' races.

Swimmers are expected to wear full club kit to these galas. Parents too are encouraged to support the team by wearing Guildford Green. The division finals and especially the national final in April are where fancy dress, face paints, rattles, wigs can all be seen – there is a prize at the National Final for the best supporters!

If club transport is provided (always for the Final and sometimes for more distant venues in the first 2 rounds) all swimmers will be expected to travel on the coach. If there are exceptional reasons why this is not possible this **MUST** be agreed with the coaches beforehand.

Once on poolside (although sometimes after warm up) a team sheet will be available and your swimmer will be able to read this to see which events they are swimming. Swimmers swim the stroke and distance allocated to them. There is no discussion about this as in the weeks prior to the competition a great deal of thought has gone into what stroke each swimmer should do. Relays are always swum in the order stated.

Do not be disappointed if your swimmer only does one relay swim in the evening - it is an honour to be chosen to swim for their club.

All swimmers are expected to stay until the end of the event and to support their team mates and to congratulate the winning club and the other participating clubs.