

BRAINTREE & BOCKING SWIMMING CLUB

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Gala and Competition Information

You should have the following items with you when you go to a gala:

- BBSC Swimming Hat + spare
- BBSC Shirt or T-Bag – Any awards **MUST** be received wearing a BBSC club shirt.
- Two pairs of goggles (including pristine, adjusted, lucky, gala-goggles)
- Jumper / Shorts / tracksuit bottoms – to wear on poolside (something they can easily takeoff / put on over your swimwear)
- Plenty of drink - water or a lightly diluted juice is fine.
- Healthy Snack - dried fruit, banana etc, jaffa cake, healthy - NO SWEETS, CAKES, CRISPS etc.
- Towel
- If you are going to be there for more than a few hours take something to relax with, MP3 player, book etc.
- Spare costume
- Sense of fun and a POSITIVE ATTITUDE, striving to be the best YOU can.

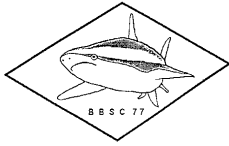
YOU pack your bag

Pack your own bag, YOU are the athlete, YOU need to know what YOU have with YOU and where it is. YOU need what is in it. YOU have worked and trained hard to get here and your parents or carers have worked hard to get YOU to training. Who are YOU now to sit back and have them wait on YOU. It's time for YOU to start sorting out stuff for YOU. The first step to controlling your own swimming as YOU move into competition is YOU packing your own kit. YOU need it, YOU use it, YOU pack it.

Sleep and night-before food

There is no substitute for sleep and you need it before competition. Many of your friends, especially non-competitive types, will arrange awake-overs on Friday nights – avoid these and get your head down. If you are daft enough to go then, at the gala, when you are feeling drowsy and dazed and swimming like a lemon, you will know why. Meanwhile your 'friend's' performance, slouched on the settee guzzling fizzy drinks and pizza and gawping at the telly while texting their X-Factor votes in, will be undiminished. If you still go ahead and go to Friday sleepovers then you will be helping the coaches form an opinion of the level of your ambition.

Get home from training on Friday and eat a big bowl of pasta, rice or potatoes, relax a bit and then head for bed. What's the point in training for perfection for months and then crocking your body the night before so that you can only disappoint yourself and let down your family and team-mates.



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Information about pre-race meals

Keep in mind that a pre-race meal affects your performance. You should NOT change your eating habits drastically on the day you have a gala. You should however avoid certain foods which tend to upset your stomach or cause discomfort. It is a good policy to finish eating a moderate-sized meal at least 2 1/2 to 3 hours before competing, if you are in a morning session, eat something which is light on the stomach and what you enjoy.

Morning sessions are the toughest from this point of view – anyone can eat a bowl of pasta or couscous at lunchtime but you have to get things you like such as porridge, lots of jam toast, cereal and juices or whatever in at breakfast. This goes for whatever time it is – you may have to drive 40miles for an 08.15 warm-up so it might be very early. Picky eaters or swimmers who don't just get the fuel in and think they can perform are kidding themselves. You may enjoy the parental "pleading breakfast dance" but it is time for YOU to get on with getting prepared for action without fuss. This isn't about what YOU LIKE it is about what YOU NEED. Try to avoid the following foods prior to a gala:

- Fried potatoes, chips, fried chicken flesh in glue and breadcrumbs, hamburgers, pies, avian protein 'nuggets*' (*protein, fat and starch 'blobs'). Or any other methods of retailing compressed offal slurry and mechanically recovered protein made palatable by immersion in saturated fats.
- Spicy and BBQ food.
- Hard-to-digest vegetables: radish, onion, cucumber, and raw vegetables.
- Large servings of steak and fish
- If you are nervous, avoid milk and dairy products.
- The club website contains a complete nutritional guide.

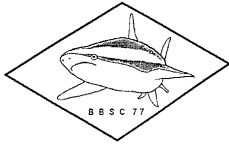
Eating during the competition

PLEASE! do not eat anything during the competition, and especially in between heats with the possible exception of maybe a very small snack if you are there for more than a couple of hours. (If you are hungry have some of your drink by just taking little sips, this stops you from feeling bloated. You should NEVER have fizzy drinks, unless it is an isotonic drink ie; Lucozade Sport – water is the best drink there is. Save money and experiment with making your own special energy drink: bit of fruit juice, lots of water, pinch of sugar, pinch of salt (if you believe in that stuff) it's probably going to be as good or better than those bottles of energy drink you buy in the shops

We are told that for 20 minutes after activity like a race our bodies use any sugar we take and send it not to our stomach but straight to our muscles ready for more activity. When you get out of the water after a race that race is over, done, history – review with coach at the pool-end, learn and move on. Your job is now to prepare your body for the next race; have a drink, have some sugar like a sweet, fruit, dates, apricots – all low volume – high sugar – NO BUNS. Keep your body warm and ready through flexing and stretching.

No Tears before bedtime

What if your swim has not gone as well as you hoped? You may find it difficult to control your emotions, if this is the case let your coach know that you are going to have a shower and let your frustration, disappointment out in the shower. Doing this on the poolside is a distraction for your teammates who may be about to compete themselves and makes it hard for them to be celebrate their own performances. Remember there is nothing at that moment you can do about the race – the training pool is where you lay the foundations for your performances.



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Warm-up

You should warm-up on the poolside as well as in the water. This should last for approx. 15 minutes. For example:

- Arm rotations
- Horizontal arm swings
- Trunk twisting
- Light Shoulder Stretch
- Ankle stretching

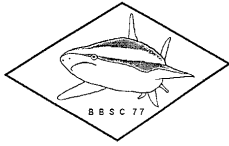
Pre-race warm-up in the pool:

At every gala there is a short session when everyone gets into the water for a warm-up – you will be told which lane is for BBSC. Take the warm up seriously as it really puts you a little more at ease. Remember to get dry, put on a dry costume and keep warm afterwards – BBSC always uses the same warm up procedure:

- 2 x (100fr + 100bk)
- 200 IM drill
- 4 x 50m – 25m sprint (including turn) + 25m easy backstroke
- Ensure that you have checked any 'counts' i.e. backstroke turns that you need.
- 25m sprints off the blocks, ensure that you do at least one of each stroke you are swimming

Why stretch?

Stretching a muscle causes the fibres in the muscle to lengthen. Longer muscle-fibres generate more contraction force than shorter fibres. It is important to not over-stretch and cause yourself an injury but they should be flexed. During any exercise muscles produce lactic acid that causes the muscle-fibres to shorten and reduces contraction-force. This is what we feel as fatigue develops and our muscles begin to 'tighten up'. If you begin the exercise (swimming) with longer well-stretched muscle-fibres, you will be able to generate greater contraction forces for longer as lactate builds up. YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SWIM MORE AGGRESSIVELY FOR LONGER



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Will you prepare to swim your best – or do your best to wait to swim?

After you have finished your warm-up, you should take a hot shower, dry yourself off and keep warm. Change your costume and wear a dry suit. It might be a long time before your next swim and you should keep your muscles warm. Many sensible swimmers will get dressed warmly and even wear a hood or a woolly hat. You need to keep your feet warm. Standing for three hours on a wet, cold, tiled floor will chill you through. Keep moving and doing light stretches to loosen your muscles, support your team mates, watch the swimming.

Try to stay active! Think positive. Do not lie down and have a sleep, you will find it hard to get your adrenaline running through your body before you race. One of the best things is to run on the spot, jump or skip to get your heart working faster ready for the work it is about to do, OTHERWISE it might just be getting up to working speed at about the time you touch the end wall. (Suprising how many swimmers use the sleeping method!)

Ensure that you know when you are swimming, keep an eye on what events are racing. Events can speed through a lot more quickly than you expect. Your coach or whip will do their best to ensure that you are ready in time, but ultimately it is YOU that are responsible for being prepared for the start of your next race..

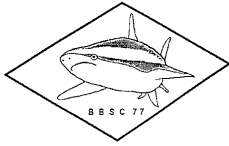
Before you go to the 'whipping-area' find your coach for your pre-race briefing and start stretching for real without straining yourself – do not sit 'slumped' trying to look as if you are waiting for a bus and blending in with the other 'slumped' swimmers. Get up and stretch and keep inhaling and thinking about what you are about to do. When you have swum come and get feedback on your race from your coach, they are the ones to talk to, not Mum, Dad, Auntie, Uncle or next doors cat!

What am I doing here?

If it is a team gala the teamsheet will be in the club area and you will be able to read this. 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 discussion has gone into what stroke YOU need to do and what YOU are capable of. Relays are always swum in the order stated. (Obviously if you are unwell or an injury means a limb may actually part company with your body during the event the coach may re-assign you to another event.)

There are always 'whips' to control the swimmers, one for the girls and one for the boys, ensure that they know where you are at all times. They will tell you when to get ready for your race.

When going to the marshalling-area put your goggles on your head or push them down around your neck. If you are carrying them it is possible that you will put them down or get in a faff at the last minute. It will stop you chewing and biting them – goggles always snap in the marshalling area never in the pool – now why would that be? Have your swim-cap on in plenty of time. Lads tie your costumes up tight – double-knot!



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Housekeeping and behaviour

Treat every gala as an opportunity to learn your craft. Watch the fastest swimmers and also look for what you think are the 'best' swimmers in the water and see what they do. Watch what they do out of the water as well, how they prepare to swim, how they warm up, and their levels of concentration and focus prior to swimming. Where there is a scoreboard note their times and learn what a fast swim looks like – looks can be deceiving. When you swim find out your times, remember your PB, look for ways to improve everything you do. Look at the swimmers in the other lanes and remember them – then remember where you came when you next see them. This is not a rehearsal, this is the real thing.

Rowdy behaviour distracts you from concentrating and preparing to do your best. If you are noisy or talking loudly at the start of races swimmers can be distracted and the officials will not be happy – the club may even be told off. Remember that you are guests of another club in another town. We are a sports team so wear sports clothes and club uniform on the poolside. DO NOT wear street-shoes on the poolside – EVER! Keep the team-area clean and tidy, pick up all of your papers and litter and leave no mess. If the club does leave a mess, even once, some people will ALWAYS remember it and the club may not be invited back.

If it is a team competition do not leave as soon as you have swum, it is a TEAM event, just as you appreciate being cheered on so do your team mates, stay to the end and cheer the result, do everything that you can to ensure that BBSC is a team remembered not only for their good performances, but also for their sportsmanship.

Conclusion

This might seem like a long stern list making competing seem like an ordeal – it isn't, it is very exciting and great fun and you really will enjoy it. You might feel everyone else is very calm and untroubled but they have been 'first-timers' too and know how you feel and will support you. It might be a bit of a blur but you will enjoy it. The points above are years of learning written on one page and it would be impossible for you to remember it in one go, so don't worry. This is a document to come back to and check and see what you have remembered from it. It will also be interesting thinking of all the little tricks and ideas you come up with yourself.

Good Luck!