**Club Open Water Swimming**

**(Blackwater Sailing Club)**

**NOP and EAP**

These procedures cover Open Water Swimming at the Blackwater Sailing Club training lake only.

**Normal Operating Procedure (NOP)**

Water Quality

* + Water Testing must be completed and a safe result returned before any Open Water Testing begins each season.
  + Additional testing will be completed when the weather heats up and after major changes in the weather, to check the continued water quality throughout the season.
  + Swimming will stop upon the receipt of a poor result, within BTF guidelines, until additional testing has proven the quality is safe again.
  + It is the responsibility of the open water swimming coordinator to ensure the water testing is completed.
  + The condition of the water shall be visually assessed by the session leader before each session. Any visual evidence of poor water quality, eg algae bloom, and the session will be cancelled until the quality can be clarified.
  + It is the responsibility of the session leader to ensure the pre-session checks are completed.
  + The members will be advised on sensible water quality safety precautions.

Weather

* + The session leader shall check the weather forecast before the session
  + The session shall be delayed, suspended or cancelled if:
  + There is mist and fog; the session can only begin if it clears.
* If there is heavy rain making it difficult to observe or rescue swimmers.
  + The session shall be cancelled if:
* There are electrical storms in the area.
* If strong wind/waves which make it difficult to observe or rescue swimmers.

Water Temperature

* + The water temperature will be taken before each session by the session leader.
  + Based on the water temperature the following will be implemented
  + Less than 12oC – NO SWIMMING
  + 12 oC –Adults can only swim 1000m (2 laps)
  + 12.5 oC – Adults can only swim 1500m (3 laps)
  + 13 oC – Adults can only swim 2000m (4 laps)
  + 14 oC – Minimum temperature for youth members. Any distance for adults.
  + Above 20 oC – wetsuits are optional for Adults. At the discretion of the committee individual members may be given permission to not to use wetsuits below 20 oC. Eg training for channel swim.
  + Above 24 oC –wetsuits are optional for Juniors
  + The water temperature and restrictions will be advised to the swimmers as part of the session briefing.

Access

* + The sessions occur at Blackwater Sailing Club in their training lake; Blackwater Sailing Club, Heybridge Basin, CM9 4SD.
  + Sessions will be only at times agreed with Blackwater Sailing Club when the lake will not be used for boats. If boats start using the lake the swimming session must stop.
  + Swimming is only permissible at sessions which have been advertised in advance by the club via the website and club Facebook group(s).
  + Safe access to and from the lake for both users and emergency vehicles shall be checked before each use. The session leader must have the code for the main gate so it can be opened prior to the start of the session.
  + Safe access to and from the water will be via the bank or pontoon.
  + It is the responsibility of the session leader to ensure safe access checks are completed.
  + If a member of the club needs additional support to safely access and use the lake then they shall be advised to talk to members of the committee so these requirements can be addressed before starting open water swimming. Eg lead swimmer for partially sighted swimmer.

Junior Members

* A list of Junior members with permission to swim in the lake will be provided by the Junior Coaches and be available at the lake. Permission is based on demonstrated swimming ability in the Junior pool sessions. A Junior Coach must be in attendance at every junior lake session to supervise who are allowed to swim.
* Juniors must swim back and forth swim along the East side of the lake where access and egress is good. The Junior Coaches can give additional permission for older Juniors, of suitable standard and experience, to complete the full lap with the Adult members. This will be recorded on the approved junior swimmer list.
* Parents / other supporters must be in attendance on the bank to look after the Juniors when they get out or need general support. So the Spotter is not distracted.

Initial Swim

* Before members can open water swim they must have paid their membership fee and completed the ‘Open Water Swim Registration Form’.
* Forms will only be given to club members who have proved their swimming ability, usual by swimming at club pool sessions.
* All swimmers will complete a practice swim in the lake, upon successful completion of the practice swim a open water swim hat will be issued.
* Practice swims will be conducted before the session is started.

Staffing

* Sessions require a minimum of 1 session leader and 2+ swimmers with safety buoy. The swimmers with the buoy should stay evenly spread around the lap to provide the best coverage. For a small group 1 swimmer with a buoy could be used so long as the group stays together. Swimmers with the buoy must have had training, which includes practice casualty rescue, before undertaking this role.
* The session leader acts as principle spotter
* Maximum of 15 swimmers allowed in the water per 1 spotter on the shore, or less at the discretion of the session leader. With additional spotters more swimmers can enter the water.
* Additional spotters will have a whistle so they can raise the alarm with the session leader who has the air horn
* Additional spotters can change midsession so long as their relief is in place, and a handover given, before the current spotter stops looking after the swimmers in the water.

Signing in, Briefing and Swimming

* + All members who wish to swim must attend the start of the session briefing.
* No other members can join the swimming session once swimming has started. The session leader must not be distracted from their duties as spotter by signing people in and conducting briefings.
  + The session leader will check all swimmers are on the open water swimmers list, have their open water swim hat and paid their swim fee. No hat, no money, no swim, No Exceptions
  + A briefing will be given to all swimmers covering the course and reiterating the important safety points:
  + Must sign out by returning ID band to board as soon as they exit the water.
  + Must swim following the course; no swimming across the middle of the lake or in reverse direction.
  + Swimmers to ensure everyone has space to swim safely, and they should not swim too close to the buoys to avoid the ropes.
  + No horseplay or diving.
  + Must swim correct stroke on the front.
  + Swimmers must exit the lake if they start to get cold or have a cramp / an injury.
  + Only turn on to back or stop if needing assistance, also raise hand in air.
  + Upon hearing the air horn all swimmers without a safety buoy to safely exit the lake immediately.
  + Any restriction on distance due to temperature.
  + Advise cleaning hands and showering post swimming.
* Sessions can only begin once all swimmers are signed in and have id bands from the board, the briefing is completed and the swimmers with the buoy and spotter(s) are ready.
* The session leader must have at their location the air horn, first aid kit and charged mobile phone.

**Emergency Action Plan (EAP)**

Swimmer in Difficulty

* Swimmer in difficulty raises alarm by turning on to back and raising arm, or spotter notices swimmer struggling in the water.
* The session leader sounds air horn (2 blasts at least 5 seconds long) and all swimmers without a safety buoy safely exit the water.
* The swimmers with the buoy stop and look at the session leader who will direct them to the casualty.
* Once at the casualty the swimmer with the buoy will keep their distance and hand the buoy to the casualty. The casualty should hold on to the buoy for support.
* The swimmer tows the casualty who is holding on to the buoy, to shore, with the waist belt and lanyard.
* Once at shore first aid and reassurance to be provided, as required. Members with first aid qualifications are recorded on the open water swimmers list.

Unconscious Swimmer

* Spotter notices unconscious swimmer and the raises alarm.
* The session leader sounds air horn (2 blasts at least 5 seconds long) and all swimmers without a safety buoy safely exit the water.
* The swimmers with the buoy stop and look at the session leader who will direct them to the casualty.
* The session leader dials 999, informing them we have a casualty in the water.
* The swimmer with the buoy turns the casualty on to their back and puts the buoy under the casualties head. The swimmer can then chin tow the casualty to the shore using the buoy to support the casualty and swimmer. Other swimmers with buoys could take over the tow part way if the 1st swimmer is tiring and slowing.
* The session leader sends spare swimmers to both the Blackwater Sailing Club house to get their defibrillator, and to the road to direct the emergency services.
* Once at the shore first aid should be administered. Members with first aid qualifications are recorded on the open water swimmers list.

Swimmers with the buoy must been given training which includes practice with the buoy before undertaking this role.

First Aid

* The first aid kit must be present at all sessions and should contain:
  + Gloves, plasters and tape.
  + Triangular bandage.
  + Foil blanket.
  + Resuscitation face shield.
  + Basic first aid guide.
* Calling for medical assistance
  + Dial 999 on the mobile

(There is a landline in the Blackwater Sailing Club, if required)

* + Post Code of the Blackwater Sailing club is on ID band board.
  + If casualty is in the water let the call handler know so correct emergency services can be dispatched
  + You will need to provide details of the number of patients, types of injuries, age, sex, how the incident occurred, current level of alertness/consciousness, and any other life signs.
  + The call handler will be there to support you; offering suitable guidance. Listen carefully and speak clearly at all times
  + If the Air Ambulance is responding to the incident you will be advised. The playing field next to the sailing club would be the most suitable location for it to land if you asked. Position of field is: 51o 43.9’ N, 00o 42.7’E, also on ID band board.
  + Members should go out on to the access road to direct the emergency services to the training lake.