

S C O T T I S H *swimming*  
everyone can swim!

**National Squad Programme**

**Selection Policy & Times Rationale**

**Final Version – 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2006**

## Introduction

The Scottish Swimming Performance Plan was rolled out in 2005, including the selection policy for the National Squad Programme, where swimmers were selected for the appropriate squad via the Gold, Silver and Bronze selection process. Through the implementation of the policy, and the flexibility that was allowed during this process at the start of the 2005/06 season, a number of challenges were identified. These challenges highlighted a need for a review of the selection policy.

The revised policy will be implemented prior to the commencement of the Scottish National Age Group Championships on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2006, and will form the **basis** of selections for the next three years.

## Background

Many of the country's leading coaches have demonstrated continued support for the overall philosophy behind the Scottish Swimming Performance Plan taking us through to 2012. They have, however, also observed that the current system of selection demonstrated a lack of equality between genders and ages as well as no easily identifiable explanation of the rationale for the system. It is acknowledged that a revision of the policy may be frustrating after only one year of implementation, however, the review is essential in ensuring that the policy is correct.

The short comings of the original proposal are evidenced throughout the selected squads for the 2005 – 06 season, and include:

- Twelve [12] girls and no [0] boys selected for the Scottish Youth Squad despite several high quality talented boys achieving well in the relevant age groups.
- A general bias towards girls throughout the structure, i.e. the girls times are significantly easier than boys times, particularly in the 11-15 age groups.
- A number of the country's highest achieving elite (international) senior level swimmers only achieving the 'Silver' level criteria.
- More swimmers achieved the 'Silver' / Area Institute selection criteria than the available funded places for that programme.
- The 'Bronze' level criteria did not deliver as many swimmers as anticipated in order to put in place an effective 'District Regional Programme'.
- Insufficient swimmers achieving the 'Bronze' standard led to each of the four Districts applying criteria in four separate ways when the intention was to have one system across the country.

## **The Need**

Based on the background above, it was clear that the selection criteria for Scottish Swimming's national squad needed to be revised to be:

- Clear and transparent;
- Easily understood by swimmers, coaches, parents and administrators;
- Objective, however with a degree of subjective assessment where obvious anomalies occur;
- Rational, based on real, accurate, justifiable and explainable statistical data; and
- Swimmer development focussed, based on realistic rates of progression for age group and senior swimmers.

## **The Philosophy**

Scottish Swimming is part of British Swimming. Scottish Swimming's plans outline headline performance targets, many of which are aligned to achieving success as part of Great Britain, e.g. achievement at the British Championships, selection for the European Junior Championships, and selection for the Olympic Games.

The philosophy behind the new policy is, therefore, based on achievement at British level and the historical data of swimming results in Great Britain.

For this reason, an analysis of the data in the British swimming all-time ranking lists was carried out. Performances were tracked for all ages (from 11 to 18, plus Open age) across all competition events (long course).

Performances ranked tenth [10<sup>th</sup>] and one hundredth [100<sup>th</sup>] in the all-time lists were used as the guidelines. Tenth was used as a guide to very high level achievement within each age but without being affected by any 'freak' or 'extraordinary' talented performers or performances that may sit within the top few rankings. One hundredth place was used as a good measure of high level depth within each age group.

This data was then examined to determine the relative standards of Scottish swimmers, at what level Scotland should pitch its various squads, and the rate of progression of swimmers between age groups.

The data used is based on literally millions of swims from all ages of swimmers across all events over an extended period of time (year range 1995 – 2005) and therefore the data provides accurate information of the standards of British swimmers, and consequently the relative strengths and weaknesses of Scottish swimmers within that framework.

## **Selection Criteria**

The original policy allowed swimmers to achieve at three different levels (Gold-Silver-Bronze), and to achieve varying numbers of events at each age and level to be selected. This approach is retained. Furthermore, through the use of the Gold, Silver & Bronze system, swimmers not attaining the very highest standard at any given stage, will be picked up within one of the other categories, thus allowing swimmer development to take place at an individual rate. In addition, the philosophy of the selection policy promotes an inclusive approach to swimmer development.

### **Numbers Required**

The target number of swimmers for each of the levels is identified within the Scottish Swimming Performance Plan, and therefore the following targets were used for the revised policy:

Level	Target Numbers	Squad
Gold: 17-20+ yrs	*20	Senior / **SIS
Gold: 14-16 yrs	*20	Youth / **AIS
Silver: 17-20 yrs	*20	Youth / **AIS
Silver: 13-16 yrs Bronze: 17-20 yrs	*80	Youth Development
Bronze: 11-16 yrs	*600-800	District Regional

\* The numbers identified are guidelines and not absolutes. If, however, the number of swimmers achieving selection standards is not sustainable, Scottish Swimming reserves the right to limit numbers.

\*\*Subject to discussion and agreement with the Scottish Institute of Sport and Area Institute Network.

At this point it is critical to highlight that the numbers of swimmers that will reach each level of the programme is entirely controlled by a combination of where the qualifying times are set, and the criteria requirements within each age band / level (i.e. how many, and which times are needed).

Regardless of the standards within the country, by adjusting these factors accordingly, virtually any number of swimmers could be attained at each level. However, setting the times and criteria to achieve a specific target is not easy, and requires careful consideration of many different issues. These include:

- The current standards of swimmers within the country;
- The numbers and distribution of gender and ages within the country; and
- The available competitions that can be used for qualifying and the events they contain for each age group.

These issues must then be considered and balanced in conjunction with a desire to fulfil the key principles of long term athlete development.

### **Level and Ages**

Taking into account the different maturation rates between males and females, and a philosophy of not exposing high achieving age group swimmers to too much support too early, swimmers are able to attain the three different levels (Gold-Silver-Bronze) of achievement at the following ages:

Boys	Girls
Gold @ 15 yrs+	Gold @ 14 yrs+
Silver @ 14 yrs+	Silver @ 13 yrs+
Bronze @ 11 yrs+	Bronze @ 11 yrs+

### **Number of Times Required**

It is widely recognised in long term athlete development planning that successful senior swimmers invariably underwent a good background of multi-event aerobic training in their formative years. In order to promote this practice among Scottish swimmers and coaches, swimmers are required to achieve selection times in one or more 200 metre or longer events from ages 11 through to 15. From 16 years onwards, swimmers are able to achieve the selection times in any event distance. Please note also that swimmers will only be able to achieve times in 50m events from age 16 upwards, and at the age of 16 only one 50m time can be used.

**Refer to the following table for specific age requirements.**

## Number of Times Required

Age	Gold	Silver	Bronze
20	1	1	2
19	1	1	2
18	1	2	3
17	1	2	3
16	2 (Max 1 x 50m event)	2 (Max 1 x 50m event)	3 (Max 1 x 50m event)
For 11-15 years selection events must include 1 swim from 2 of the following 3 categories: <u>Freestyle, Form, I.M.</u>			
15	3 (min 2 @ 200+)	3 (min 2 @ 200+)	3 (min 2 @ 200+)
14	Girls: 4 (min 3 @ 200+ including 1 @ 400+) Boys: N/A	4 (min 3 @ 200+ including 1 @ 400+)	4 (min 3 @ 200+ including 1 @ 400+)
13	N/A	Girls: 4 @ 200+ (min 1 @ 400+) Boys: N/A	4 @ 200+ (min 1 @ 400+)
12	N/A	N/A	3 @ 200+ (min 1 @ 400+)
11	N/A	N/A	2 @ 200+

**200+ = all 200m, 400m, 800m and 1500m events.**

**400+ = all 400m, 800m and 1500m events.**

**Example:** A swimmer aiming to achieve Gold level at 16 years needs to achieve 2 Gold times in any two events, but only one 50m time can be used.

### Age as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006

It is important that all swimmers receive the support that they require and therefore in the case of exceptional circumstances -eg top level performances, injury, illness – the Performance Director, on discussion and agreement with the National Coach, can place a swimmer within the appropriate level of the National Programme.

**Please note that selections to the Area and Scottish Institute are at present still subject to discussion and agreement with the Scottish Institute of Sport and the Area Institute Network.**

## Selection Competitions

In order to be successful at International level, swimmers must be able to achieve their best performance in a single swim on a given day. This is promoted by identifying precise selection opportunities the further up the programme swimmers progress. The philosophy of the 'Bronze' level, however, is to be as inclusive as possible (11 – 16yrs) and therefore no restriction on meets is put in place for this level.

Age	Meets where you can achieve criteria
11-16 Bronze	Any licenced meet (Short Course or Long Course)
13-16 Silver 17-20 Bronze	District Championships, Scottish & British National Championships, other meets agreed in advance with Director of Performance (Short Course or Long Course)
14-20 Gold 17-20 Silver	Scottish & British National Championships, International events, other meets agreed in advance with Director of Performance (Long Course ONLY)

The selection process will be managed by Scottish Swimming through the use of the Hy-Tek system. It is anticipated that all clubs will progress towards using the mentioned system and to this end, Scottish Swimming has implemented an incentive scheme over the past nine months to encourage clubs to take up the Hy-Tek software. Swims from the following events (where Hy-Tek is in use) will automatically be entered in to the system:

- District Championships
- Scottish National & Age Championships
- Scottish Short Course Championships
- British National Age/Youth Championships & Trials
- National Squad International meets
- Major Championships – Olympics, World, European/Junior Championships, Commonwealth Games

The selection period will run from **1<sup>st</sup> January – 6<sup>th</sup> August 2006.**

All other selection times are to be sent as **Long Course Times** to Scottish Swimming via the swimmers club by the **7<sup>th</sup> August 2006**, preferably in Hy-Tek format or alternatively emailed using the attached form included in the electronic version of the policy. Those clubs using Hy-Tek can have the selection times sent directly, **when requested**. Please note that the conversions have been made using the ASA conversion tables.

All submissions to be sent by email to [l.mcquillan@scottishswimming.com](mailto:l.mcquillan@scottishswimming.com)  
All enquiries please contact Ally White: [a.white@scottishswimming.com](mailto:a.white@scottishswimming.com)

## The Times

### **World Top 15 Standards and the Ages of Swimmers at that Level**

One of Scottish Swimming's key performance targets is to achieve at least 8 swimmers who are ranked in the top 15 in the World Long Course rankings (2 per nation).

Thus, the current world top 15 time was examined for years 2004 and 2005 and an average determined. The average age of swimmers ranked in this world top 15 was also calculated in order to provide a guide to how long it should take to develop a swimmer to that level.

Scottish Swimming has applied an upper age band of qualifying for national squad programmes at '20 years and over'. One of the primary objectives of the programme is, therefore, to have swimmers reach the top 15 in the world standard at some point when aged 20 or older.

It was therefore important to set the fastest time in the squad structure (20+ Gold time) slightly below, but still within striking distance of the world top 15 standard. It is reasonable to expect senior athletes to be aiming to achieve 1% improvement in performance in a season and therefore 1% below the top 15 time was used as the baseline for the 20+ Gold standard.

The average age of swimmers attaining the top 15 standard was also analysed and factored into the equation for determining the actual 20+ Gold time.

In events where the average age of the world top 15 was 20 years or below, the 20+ Gold time has been set at 1% lower than the world top 15 time. This ensures that Scottish swimmers who are coming close to world elite level in their 20's are picked up by the highest level of the programme in order to help them make the next step up to top 15 achievement.

In events where the average age of the world top 15 was 21 or older, an additional 0.25% has been added for every year that the average age is above 20. For example, if the average age is 22 the 20+ Gold time required is 1.5% below the world top 15 level ( $1 + 0.25 + 0.25 = 1.5\%$ ).

This ensures that the programme recognises that it takes longer to reach the top in some events, as opposed to others, by factoring in the uppermost standard being set further away from the world top 15 time.

For interest, the oldest average age was obtained in the men's 100 freestyle at 25.13 years and the youngest was the women's 400 IM at 18.67 years. Thus, in general terms, coaches and swimmers who want to reach the world top 15 need take into account that (on average) it **may** take 6.5 years longer to do so in the men's 100 freestyle than the women's 400 IM.

By taking this into account in the uppermost times and maintaining the principle throughout all the times for all levels, Scottish Swimming ensures that the programme is reflective of actual progression and standards for every event at world level.

### **Rates of Progression Between Ages**

Using the data collected from the All-Time British Swimming Ranking Lists, the actual rates of progression of swimmers between all age groups for all events were calculated.

As anticipated these showed that progression is quicker during the younger the ages, slowing down as swimmers get older. They also showed that the rate of progression for females is lower than that for males (for all age groups). In fact, in some female events at older age groups, the standards actually regressed slightly between years. It was hypothesised that this is due to less total swimmers taking part the older the age, and thus less depth is illustrated in the historical standards.

It would not be useful to reflect these rates of progressions exactly, particularly as the aim is to keep swimmers advancing at a faster rate than the British average. The identified progression rates were used as a guideline for this programme. However, the rates were amended to maintain progression between all age groups, with the rates gradually reduced in the older the age band, and male rates progressing faster than those for females.

### **Differences Between Gold, Silver & Bronze Standards**

Determining the differences between the times at each of the three identified levels (Gold, Silver, Bronze) is a matter of taking into account the target numbers set.

#### **Gold to Silver**

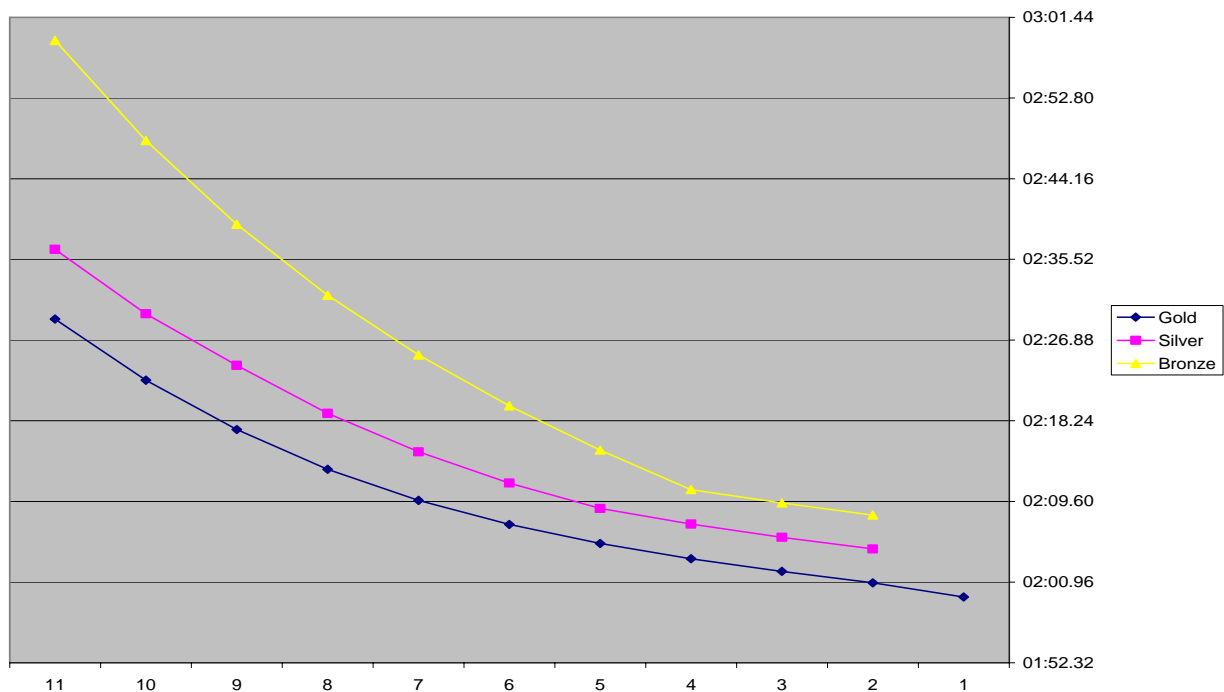
After considering the current standards of swimmers in Scotland it was determined that for the most part, the Silver standard should be set 3% slower than the Gold time. However, in order to promote the development of aerobic training for the 200 metre and longer events, at the younger age groups the standard has been set slightly lower than 3%.

#### **Gold to Bronze**

It is essential that there are high levels of numbers achieving the (11-16 years) Bronze standards (600-800 total). This equates to approximately 50-60 boys and 50-60 girls from each single year age band. In order to achieve the target number, various factors were included:

- The events required for achievement (largely 200's and longer events);
- The numbers of swimmers currently swimming those events; and
- Availability to swim those events at meets across the country.

The resulting initial Bronze times a long way outside the Gold standard. On first appearance to coaches and swimmers, the times may appear quite easy. However, as the age increases, the difference between Gold and Bronze is gradually reduced until it reaches 6% at the older ages. An example of this can be seen in the graph below:



The graph shows the progression rates for the female 200m freestyle where the points on the x axis represent the various age bands (11 = 11 years, 2 = 20+ years, 1 = World Top 15 time).

## Conclusion

The policy is effective immediately. Any questions should be directed to the Director of Performance for Scottish Swimming, Ally White.

**30<sup>th</sup> March, 2006**