

Scottish Open Water Swimming Information Sheet - May 2010



Introduction

The profile of open water swimming has moved on in recent years. It is now included in the Olympics and with half of Britain's swimming medals in Beijing coming in these events it has now established itself on an equal footing with the more conventional pool events. In 2009 Kerri-Anne Payne became Britain's first open water world champion

Another recent innovation has been the start of the Great British Swim series which has seen thousands of swimmers taking to the water in 1 mile challenges.

There are many opportunities for swimmers to get involved in open water events. This information sheet provides some details on the sport in Scotland and how clubs or individual swimmers can take part.

Getting into Open Water

For swimmers who are competent in the pool, open water racing is a fairly easy transition. Unlike the other aquatic disciplines of water polo, diving and synchro, swimming in open water doesn't require a large amount of time to acquire new skills – it's still swimming – just in a different environment.

Most people assume that swimming in the Lochs and estuaries of Scotland is very cold, but actually, after a few minutes of acclimatisation and because you're racing, the reduced temperature isn't too much of a problem for most swimmers. There is a good correlation between pool swimming speed and open water swimming speed but it isn't exact. Quite regularly a swimmer can perform better in open water races than swimmers who would have better times in the pool.

In open water you race directly alongside your opponents rather than being in separate lanes. This is another important difference which can make open water racing more interesting and tactical.

Ideally, you should try to get some practice in open water before tackling your first race since this helps to get use to the conditions and having to navigate without the aid of a big blue line to follow. However, you should only do this if you can do it in safety with proper supervision. If you can't, you can still enter events and get your adaptation in that way. Most open water swimmers base their training in the pool and only swim in open water during competition.



The start of open water races can be fast and furious

Open Water Events in Scotland

The Scottish Open Water Swimming Calendar runs from June to September and includes a range of events covering different distance and water conditions.

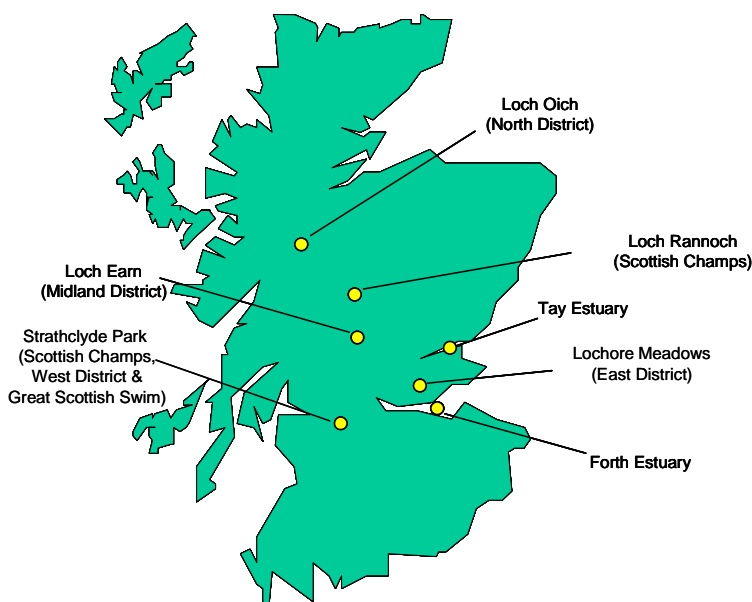
The highlight of the calendar is the Scottish Championships which this year are moving to Strathclyde Country Park near Motherwell. This will have races of 2 km and 5 km for all ages from 13 upwards as well as a 1 km race for 12 year-olds and new competitors. The Scottish Championships also include a 4 x 500 metre relay which provides another opportunity for an easy introduction to open water. This year we have also introduced a 1 Km wetsuit race.

The main events in the Scottish 2010 season are as follows;

- 13th June : East District Championships – Lochore Meadows Country Park
- 3rd July : Midland District Championships – Loch Earn
- 24th July : **Scottish Championships – Strathclyde Country Park**
- 14th August : West District Championships – Strathclyde Country Park
- 15th August : Scottish Championships – Loch Rannoch
- 21st August : Great Scottish Swim - Strathclyde Country Park
- 4th September: North District Championships – Loch Oich

Swimmers in these events also compete for points in the Scottish Open Water Grand Prix series which has cash prizes for the top places.

There are also many events run by the YAABA club in the Tay Estuary and a race across the Forth Estuary at the Rail Bridge.



More information is available on request and entry forms are available on the open water section of downloads in the Scottish Swimming web site.

Open Water Swimming Outside Scotland

There are events in England run by ASA Regions, and an Age-Group Championship. Here are some dates and venues which are known at the moment.

- 3/4th July - Weymouth
- 11th July – Bosworth near Leicester.
- 18th July – Whitlingham near Norwich
- 1/2nd Aug National Age Groups - Sheffield.
- 7th Aug – North East England.
- 11th Sept - South East England.

Further a field, there are opportunities to compete at warmer water events in Europe.



Swimmers heading for the start at the French Championships

Scottish Swimmers Abroad

Scotland has an open water development squad which among other things competes abroad at some point during the season. Last year 13 swimmers competed in three of events in French Open Water swimming cup winning numerous trophies.



The start of a 10 Km race during the Scotland's 2009 French Tour

Later in the season, a Scottish representative team of 6 competed in 5 Km and 10 km sea swims in the Mediterranean near Nice. Once more Scots were successful in picking up many podium positions.



The 2009 Scotland Team - Successful in the Final Events of the French Cup

More swimmers were selected for a British development team which competed in two events abroad interspersed by a training camp.

Open water offers World and European Championships. Craig Hamilton (Warrender) was selected for the European Junior Championships and finished just outside the medals in 4th place.

Training Opportunities

There may be some opportunities to get some practice prior to competition. Training sessions are available at Lochore Meadows on Wednesday evenings and Strathclyde Park will also be providing safety provision sessions on Monday and Friday evenings during the summer.

The Great Scottish Swim

Last year saw the introduction of a mass participation event at Strathclyde Park. The Great Scottish Swim is one of a series of four events held in the UK. This combines an elite race with others for all-comers aged 16 and over. Races are 1 mile long and wetsuits are allowed. Last year over 500 swimmers of all standards took part. This year there are already around 1500 entrants with three months to go. Each of the great swims are featured in a one hour programme on Channel 4.

You can see last years event at http://www.greatswim.org/TV/Highlights_Scotland.aspx

If you aren't ready to compete in a formal race under SASA rules and without a wetsuit this could give you a more gentle introduction.

Contacts

Scottish open water swimming is run by a national committee which contains convenors from each of the districts following;

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Open Water Swimming Sites

SASA Open Water Downloads
<http://www.scottishswimming.com>
> Downloads > Open Water

Ye Amphibious Ancients Bathing Assoc.
<http://www.yeaaba.btik.com>

Great Scottish Swim
<http://www.greatswim.org/Default.aspx>

ASA Events
<http://www.swimming.org/britishswimming/events/view/list>