

Helping at a Team Gala

(By Katrina Pritchard, DSC Gala Secretary)

During the course of the year DSC enters teams into a number of league competitions. We also host several team galas and sometimes attend those organised by other clubs.

The purpose of this document is to explain the official and volunteer roles that we need to fill for our galas to operate successfully.

As Gala Secretary my role is largely administrative and involves scheduling galas, inviting teams, organising the events and looking after the correspondence with the various leagues. The teams are selected by our team manager (Keith Carter), based on PB information and input from Sue.

While these galas are a key feature of the competitive calendar they are equally important as team building events. Swimmers from different squads all come together, and the younger swimmers in particular really enjoy being around those at the top of the club (and, in most cases, the reverse is also true!). Whatever the results of the gala, there is always a great atmosphere poolside!

Our home galas are not too tricky to organise, certainly nothing like as complicated as the Open or Club Championships. We need a number of qualified officials (timekeepers, judges etc) to run the galas successfully and the club are always looking for parents to train for these roles. The club can organise and pay for this training, so please let us know if you are interested. However, we also rely on volunteers to sign up to help out on the night. Some roles (scoring, announcing) are best picked up by working with an experienced volunteer initially but many (door, refreshments, stewarding) need no previous experience. You can also watch your child swim whilst doing your job.

The full list required for a home gala is as follows:

Officials: Starter, Referee, Judges (at least one per team), Chief Time Keeper (usually 2), Time Keepers (2 per lane) (NB each team should bring a judge and time keeper with them so we do not need to fill all these roles ourselves!)

Stewards (Whips): These organise the swimmers for their events. You will be given a team list by the team manager and generally look after either the boys or girls team along with other helpers. Basically it involves ensuring the swimmers are sent to the start in good time for their races; experienced swimmers need very little organising but younger swimmers often need reassurance and clear (and repeated!) instructions. Swimmers should not leave poolside without the permission of the stewards. You do not need to be qualified but if you help regularly we will ask you to be CRB checked, the club organises and pays for this, via the Child Welfare Officer. Whenever possible, the Child Welfare Officer will also be poolside at home galas.

Announcer: The announcer works closely with the referee and recorders to share important information about the gala, including the safety announcement and results along the way. Microphone provided!

Door: Sell programme and raffle tickets to spectators and take details of those wishing to take photographs in accordance with ASA regulations and child protection policies. Once the gala has started you are free to watch.

Refreshments: The most important job! Simply taking drinks to the officials poolside at regular intervals during the course of gala (cups, drink, trays provided!).

Recorders: Processing the results for each event and add up the scores. At the moment we use manual recording for team galas so this does involve pencil, paper and a bit of brain work, but training will be given.

Press: Take notes during the gala and write up a report for the local press, without this the club and swimmers will not appear in the local press.

Usually the volunteer list is posted (notice board/table on club night) at the same time as the team list goes out. Regulars tend to sign up quite quickly, but there is always a fair amount of chasing around to get all these slots filled. Many of us who are now regularly involved in galas started off doing refreshments or helping on the door as these roles seemed less daunting in the early days. I would be happy to have too many people helping out in these roles if it helps to get new people involved and, of course, if you volunteer you don't have to pay any entrance fees to watch the gala!

For Away Galas we are usually required to provide one judge, two time keepers, a team manager and two stewards to accompany the team.