**Competition Planning (By Ian Ingman COLSC Coach)**

It's important to plan out your future competitions to ensure you get a chance to swim all the events you want to, and, also give you enough space and time between competitions to fully prepare for all events especially the more important championships. Competing too often uses up both valuable time and energy, which you could use to either rest and recover and catch up on other things like homework or this time could be used to train, if your regular training programme has been interrupted for any reason.

When considering which galas to enter, you could ask yourself the following questions:

Why enter a gala? Are you entering a gala for a specific reason such as trying to gain a qualify time for another gala? Are you entering it to try and work on your competition skills? Are you entering it to try out a new event or race distance and stroke? Are you entering a gala to race tough and do lots of events in a short period of time?

What level of gala should I enter? To be able to achieve a high-level competition / championship qualifying time, you may have to enter a Level 1 or 2 gala. To gain a County Championship Qualifying Time, you can enter a Level 3 gala. Some Club Championship events are accredited a License level 4 Meet by the ASA if you have the right number and standard of official, which again allows your time to be added to the ASA Website for official purposes and entering additional galas in the future. Do you want to enter a low-level gala to try out a new event?

Which galas to enter? The best way to think about all galas is a set of stepping stones or a continuous development ladder. o You enter your first galas such as either an internal club championship or club relay gala at the initial stage of your development or first step on the competition ladder to gain experience and every gala you do after this, should add to your experience and knowledge but also challenge you in the right way either in terms of times, quality of races, level of gala or improvement of skills. Each gala should have a specific purpose and reason for entering.

How many races to enter per gala? Depending upon the level of gala and, also the time of year, you need to consider how many races to enter in the whole gala. For example, if you are at the start of the year, you may consider entering more races as you want to get rid of the summer race blues and try things out. If you are later in the year and your trying to qualify for a specific meet or championship such as the County Championships, then you may only consider entering a small number of races in the gala to give yourself the best chance to achieve all your aims and ambitions and not get too tired after doing lots of races.

How many races to enter per session? In a normal open meet, it’s normally very hard to enter more than two to three races per session, if you are aiming to swim very well in all events, when you have to warm up and then swim down after every race. In the Olympics, Michael Phelps swam 50,000m in a week when you added up all his races, warm up’s and swim down’s. I understand that for the younger swimmers, a swim down pool isn’t always available or an option but you need to then replace this with a land warm down or stretching session to allow your muscles to fully recover for your next race.

I hope the points I’ve given you, are informative and gives you something to think about when you’re next entering your son / daughter for a competition.