

The IRC Moving forwards



Purpose

This booklet outlines the changes that are being made to the individual events at the Inter Regional Championship (IRC).

As with any changes that effect the Pathway we have consulted widely and hope that this is reflected in the decisions that have been made.

Further we also understand that with any change it is important to highlight and explain the rationale that sits behind it. We have done our best to set out our reasoning in a clear and logical format and hope that it helps with understanding.

As well as detailing why we believe the IRC is important, we have also set all changes against the key principles we believe any event of a National level for young athletes should align to, along with also ensuring they match up with our Athlete Development Framework.

Coaches, parents and athletes should also be aware that they are likely to see adjustments in IRC Selection Policies as a result of these changes.





Why is the IRC important?

The IRC is a first experience for many young athletes of all the learning experiences that come with preparing for a National event. Examples are the first time they have come into contact with a selection policy and the processes that surround it, setting a season around a key goal, competing at a higher level, understanding gear and wheel restrictions, wearing Regional kit, etc.

We hope that the IRC inspires athletes to want to compete and engage with our sport further up the Pathway. Over 50% of our current World Class Programme raced at an IRC and cited it as a key milestone in their development at that point.

Important in young athlete development is having an opportunity to see the next stages of development, seeing the best Youths and Juniors in the country prepare and compete first hand allows athletes to see what that next step looks like.

As the premier childrens' **event in the country it also sends strong messages about** what future athlete development should look like, essentially what our collective future focus is.

Moving the IRC Forwards

As the IRC is a key stepping stone on the pathway journey of many young British Triathletes it is important that the experiences and opportunities it offers are both high quality and relevant.

To be relevant the IRC needs to move forward and reflect triathlon's direction of travel. Over the past decade for example, with the introduction of different racing formats, the sport has got shorter and faster at senior level. Reflecting this further down the Pathway ensures we stay relevant and maintain our future focus.

Key Principles

As well as moving forwards and reflecting the sports direction of travel it is important at this age and stage of athletic development to ensure that any racing opportunity fits squarely between the following key principles;

1. Positive experience
2. Learning & development
3. Opportunity
4. Future Focus
5. Age/stage relevant





The Changes

Heats and Finals Format

Both age groups - Tristar 2 and Tristar 3 - will race over a Heats and Finals format. With an A and B Final every athlete, irrespective of their heat finishing position, will get an opportunity to race twice. Race distances will remain the same across both heat and final and are reflected below; the interval between heat and final will be a minimum of 3 hours.

Tristar 2 - Aquathlon*

(300m swim / 1.2km run) x 2

Tristar 3 - Triathlon

(300m swim / 2.6km bike / 1.2km run) x2

The Mixed Relay format will remain unchanged

* While the rationale is explained throughout, pages 7,8 & 9 give specific reasons for this change

Why? Positive experience

The Heats/Finals format is very engaging for younger athletes, it affords multiple racing opportunities and with this comes less pressure. In the current one race format a mistake can mean the end of the race for all but the one or two strongest athletes in the field. Mistakes often lead to the best learning and good learning experiences, e.g. a Heats/Finals format with the opportunity to go twice, should account for this.

A and B finals also give all athletes more opportunity to 'Race At'. Racing At means racing against people at your level, this is more likely to deliver a positive experience as more athletes will feel they are actually in a race and positively influencing what happens, rather than just trying to keep up.

A Heats/Finals format means the overall number of athletes able to race can increase, instead of 3 athletes in each individual event per Region there will be capacity for 4 in each gender/age group. This means up to 56 additional athletes benefiting from the great set of experiences that the IRC individual events will bring



Why? Learning & Development

Right through the pathway Learning and Development is a key tenet. For all developing athletes learning and the processes that support it, at every stage, outweigh outcome. Along with a positive experience what we desire from an IRC is that the athlete learns and has a process focus. The Heats/Finals format is the best format for supporting these goals as athletes race twice; it affords an opportunity to plan, prepare, race, review and go again in a short space of time as well as giving athletes more freedom to make mistakes and learn from them.

Racing against different athletes in a heat and final will significantly change race dynamics as will the different decisions an athlete will be required to make in a heat and final. All of these experiences will add to a much richer developmental experience than racing just once as previously.



Why? Opportunity

The Aquathlon format for Tristar 2 will ensure better opportunity for the youngest athletes. Aquathlons are more open and accessible and more likely to encourage athletes from outside the sport to engage.

For Tristar 3 an opportunity to ride is important. They are close to transitioning up into the Youth age group and with that the British Triathlon Youth and Junior Super Series. The number of National racing opportunities increases considerably at Youth age and it is important therefore that athletes are confident and capable on their bikes.





Why? Future focus

Racing at World Class level is getting shorter and with the addition of Mixed Relay and the strong possibility that the Heats/Finals format will be in the 2024 Olympics it is important that these changes are reflected at all levels of the Pathway. The Heats/Finals format has been part of the Youth and Junior Super Series for 3 years now and has been a great success.

Swimming standards domestically are falling across both genders and putting an overt focus on swimming by changing Tristar 2 to Aquathlon and by having proportionally longer swims in both age groups sends a clear message. Aquathlon will also be returning to the Youth and Junior Super Series along with swim distances increasing to support this messaging.

Why? Age/Stage

For athletes looking to progress into the Performance Pathway swimming especially, along with running, at Tristar ages should be the focus disciplines.

In addition we strongly believe, for the reasons already outlined, that the Heats/Final format is absolutely the best option at this age/stage. This will require athletes racing twice in one day, so the total racing load has to be appropriate to the athletes physical capacity and age/stage of **development. For Tristar 2's a full triathlon is** simply too long to then repeat again and for **Tristar 3's** doubling up will mean a very short bike in order to maintain the appropriate swim/run focus





Cycling Development

The development of cycling is still important for athletes with performance aspirations at the Tristar ages

The focus at these ages should very much be on the technical aspects e.g. cornering, bunch riding skills, learning to ride and apply power smoothly, etc. Athletes can pick these skills up in a number of ways, examples include; tri club sessions, draft legal triathlons (see below), cycling club sessions and British Cycling events - both on and off road. The goal being to be in a position, when they transition into Youth racing and the British Super Series, where they can ride confidently in a bunch and are comfortable on the different types of course that the Super Series brings.

As most regions do not have a draft legal triathlon any athletes looking for such opportunities can find options on the gear restrictions page - see page 11 for the link.

Find Out More

For more information please click on the relevant topic

[British Triathlon IRC Booklet for parents/athletes & coaches](#)

[Gear Restrictions](#)

[Wheel Regulations](#)

[British Triathlon Athlete Development Framework](#)

[British Triathlon Talent Home Page](#)

[British Triathlon Talent Identification](#)

[British Triathlon Big Weekend Home Page](#)

[Triathlon England Home Page](#) - use the right hand menu to navigate to your regional page

[Triathlon Wales Junior Series](#)

[Triathlon Scotland IRC information](#)

