

British Triathlon Youth and Junior Pathway

RACING EXPLAINED

With both international and domestic events there is a lot of racing that happens each season. On top this several events revolve around selection policies too and most years we will make changes to the Super Series to ensure we are giving our athletes the most relevant and effective development experiences. So, we feel it makes sense to broadly explain all of this in one document and to hopefully help that it is split into three parts,

1. Our philosophies on Learning and Development
2. Domestic Racing
3. International Racing

1. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Athletes at Youth and Junior stages of the Performance Pathway are very much still developing, and learning should be the absolute priority at these ages in **ALL** races. Racing covers 2 pillars of the [Athlete Development Framework](#) - [Intelligent Racing](#) and [One Day One Race](#). Athletes should be supported to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in both.

One Day One Race at this age and stage is about learning to deliver a performance on a given day. In doing this athletes need to understand that performance and outcome are different, and that best performance may not correlate with best outcome and vice versa. Whatever the outcome, it is the process that supports performance that should be the priority for developing athletes.

Intelligent Racing is about exploring decision making in races. To support Intelligent Racing, we would encourage all athletes to race with a plan. Athlete learning will come in reviewing their race and plan. Draft-legal Triathlon is very fluid and dynamic and during a race a lot of decisions are made; this means a lot can go right and equally a lot can go wrong too. Making a wrong decision should not be viewed as a failure, they will naturally happen as athletes explore different racing scenarios/strategies. Critically the best intelligent racers in our sport are very adaptable and can flex their plans if required. Fearlessness to commit to decisions and racing positively (i.e., racing with purpose and intent) should be very much encouraged over being a 'passenger', and praised no matter the outcome. A passenger is defined as an athlete who is passive in a race and just follows others with no real purpose or intent. It is far better to make decisions that may not have the desired outcome than to follow others blindly and passively.

2. DOMESTIC RACING

Revolves around the [Super Series](#) for Performance Pathway Youth and Juniors. The Super Series has some key aims: primary is that it provides the best platform for our leading athletes to learn and develop their **Intelligent Racing** and performance delivery (**One Day One Race**) skills. This is achieved by the following:

Field strength and depth - Academies across the 3 Home Nations focus race programmes on the Super Series ensuring strong fields at all events. This creates close competition, reduces time for decision making, supports **Intelligent Racing** and helps drive standards upward.

Varied racing opportunities - The Super Series looks where possible to provide a set of varied events and experiences to promote athlete learning - this includes:

Swim - beach/pontoon/deep water starts along with 1 and 2 lap swims - the latter including a WTS style Australian style exit/entrance (running onto and off beach) between laps.

Bike - flat and rolling courses with differing degrees of technical difficulty - some extremely technical, some not.

Run - flat and hilly courses, some long and straight and others more technical.

Transition - some short and compact and others large, some with short runs between disciplines and others much longer

Different formats - we have a strong belief that we should vary racing opportunities. This includes the traditional triathlon event plus events with heats and finals and/or less traditional race formats along with the addition of mixed relays. Each event will provide the athlete with a different set of learning experiences and so build their bank of **Intelligent Racing** knowledge

Geographical Spread - where possible events are spread around the country to decrease travel load. While every effort is made here it is important to understand that we do not have the financial capacity to operate our own Series and drafting format Youth and Junior events are more expensive to promote than non-drafting age group events, so this does reduce our options.

SWIMMING IN 2021

In line with changes that would have been made in 2020 we are going to re-focus on swimming. For a clearer understanding of why please read our separate document on [Swimming in 2021](#) which can be found on the competition page alongside this one. Read on to find out more about the Aquathlons being introduced this season.

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AQUATHLON

Aquathlon's were re-introduced into the 2020 Series that never happened, and there were 3 key reasons for this.

1. To improve intelligent swimming – we believe that at world level, senior athletes (across all nations) are not skilled enough in the nuances of open water swimming. This includes the various decisions that need making e.g., positioning for best effect, when to move up, which side of the group to be on, whether to cut inside or go outside around buoy, etc., along with having the skillset required to deliver well made decisions e.g., how to effectively move through a group, how to sit on feet properly, how to swim in a straight line, how to get around a buoy effectively, etc. Focusing on this at younger ages will give our future senior athletes a competitive advantage.
2. To improve swimming standards – as already outlined in the [Swimming in 2021](#) document we were aware that general swim standards in both genders were falling.
3. To make the sport more accessible – having events each year that require no cycling makes entry to the sport far more accessible for talented swim/runners.

Accessibility is also improved as Aquathlons will be raced as a North heat or a South heat. This will mean a reduction in travel time for most athletes, especially those at the furthest points of each Home Nation, compared to staging one National event. Events will be over the following multi-race, multi-distance format;

700-800m swim / 1km run (junior) – 1km run (youth)
400-500m swim / 2km run (junior) – 1.5km run (youth)
200-300m swim / 3km run (junior) – 2km run (youth)

Racing over different distances will create different racing scenarios, especially in the water, and with that require different tactics to be employed/decisions to be made. This will in turn promote the skill development or improved intelligent swimming that we are looking for. A multi-race format also ensures athletes are given an opportunity to go through 3 separate learning cycles (plan/do/review). The combined impact of all of this is a much richer and more rounded learning experience.

How will this fit into the Super Series?

Given the development impact of Aquathlon in our Pathway going forwards each heat will carry normal Super Series points. The following Regions will attend the following heats.

North – Scotland, North West, North East, Yorkshire
South – East, South West, South Central, South East, London

The central regions – Wales, East Midlands, West Midlands - will have a choice of either going to the North or South event as best fits.

NB Athletes aiming for School Games selection must ensure they attend the same Aquathlon as the rest of those athletes in their Academy.

MIXED RELAY

Mixed Team Relays offer fast, intense racing experiences in a very engaging team format. With its inclusion into the Olympic Games British Triathlon is keen to expose our young athletes to relays domestically. Through its Olympic qualification structure, the ITU is placing a heavy emphasis on the relay. We are keen to mirror this domestically and in so doing look to gain competitive advantage. For Youths and Juniors there will be 3 main opportunities at Hetton, the British Triathlon School Games and at the British Mixed Relay Championships.

1. Hetton fits at the end of a busy day of racing and is designed very much as an engaging and learning experience. To support this Academies, enter balanced teams to create closer racing. Athletes outside of Academies can join to make other teams up.
2. The British Triathlon Mixed Relay Championships and School Games will provide more focused development opportunities. In both events athletes will race to represent their Region/Academy

In addition, there are relay opportunities at the Junior and Youth Championships along with potentially at the supported ETU Cups.

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3. INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

We categorise international competition into 3 stages each looking to build on the previous and in so doing support our athletes in developing toward excelling at the highest levels of the sport.

Performance Exposure - Racing internationally is different to racing at home and brings a different set of experiences. At this level we are looking to expose athletes to these and allow them to explore the necessary strategies and processes to succeed in the international arena. Events at this level are: Super League, Banksa Bystrica and Riga ETU Junior Cups and all other non-supported ETU Junior Cups

Performance Development – This stage focuses on athletes enhancing the processes that support international performance. It is about them learning to thrive in the international environment and delivering more stable performances as a result. Events at this level are European Junior Championships, European Youth Championships and in a normal season high level ETU Junior Cups.

Performance Delivery – Unlike ALL other races at Junior level this stage has an overt outcome focus. It is getting towards the senior elite definition of a true one day one race performance where athletes excel at delivering on a given day; there is just one event at this level, the World Junior Championships.

HOW BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL AGE GROUPS FIT TOGETHER

International age groups are different to British age groups and in addition ITU/ETU age groups at Junior and Youth levels overlap too.

Age	15	16	17	18	19
ITU/ETU Junior					
ITU/ETU Youth					
GB Age Groups	Youth A		Youth B		Junior
GB Yth Teams					
GB Jnr Teams					

Our philosophy throughout the Pathway at all racing age groups and stages, right through to the World Class Podium programme, very much revolves around athletes competing to the highest levels (medalling) in their designated international age group or racing stage before moving up. E.g., at this level we would only consider a 16-year-old racing at Junior level internationally (and racing up an age group in domestic trial races) if they have won medals at European Youth level. Youth B athletes can race at Junior and Youth Championships but it not usual for an athlete to be able to make all 3 teams, and the racing load across 3 Championships and the designated selection events is a heavy one. In such unique cases thought and discussion would need to be given to the balance of their racing programme along with achievements in both their international and domestic age groups.

RACES WITH SELECTION POLICIES

There are several international and domestic opportunities for British Youth and Junior athletes. These are listed below, and selection policies can be found [here](#)

INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

World Juniors - Held annually and normally toward the end of the season they are aligned with a key senior event so athletes not only have the chance to race the best in the world in their age group but also to see top seniors in action, there is also the chance to race in a relay too.

Euro Juniors - Also annual, usually in June/July, and normally attached to the European Senior Champs. Given Europe's relative strength in triathlon the standard is just a little lower than the Worlds. Athletes benefit from a mixed relay too, always a highlight of the trip.

Euro Youths - Held annually offering multiple racing opportunities the heats and final format is spread over 3 to 4 days. Athletes race over just longer than super sprint distances along with the chance to compete in a mixed relay too. Youth A and Youth B athletes are eligible for this event.

Youth Olympics – Normally held every four years, the pandemic has, however, meant the Dakar 2022 Games being postponed until 2026. Athletes aged 16 and 17 in the calendar year are eligible. The race is over sprint distance and there is a mixed relay. Selection is very challenging with athletes needing to first compete in a British qualifier before then going to the European qualifier. Here there are just 12 places available for European athletes, with only one male and one female qualifying per nation. 2022, though will see Triathlon make a debut in the European Youth Olympics (in Banksa Bystrica) – qualification details have yet to be shared

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OTHER RACES WITH SELECTION POLICIES (International & Domestic)

ETU Junior Cups - Are a series of races held across Europe for athletes aged 16-19. They vary in quality and British Triathlon will normally choose to support some of the key events due to the learning and development opportunities these will provide – this might be because of the race location, date, course specifics and/or perceived quality of field. To be eligible for starts athletes will need to satisfy the ETU Junior Cup selection policy to demonstrate they are developmentally ready for the experience. This season's supported events will be:

Riga and Banksa Bystrica (at the time of publication these events are included on the calendar, however, we expect the situation throughout the pandemic to remain fluid)

Selection policies for ETU Junior Cups can be found [here](#) - please scroll down to and click on Junior selection policies.

Super League - Is a relatively new concept designed to promote racing over shorter non-traditional formats on technical circuits and over multiple races for leading senior athletes. Super League 2021 youth and junior events will be based in Jersey and London. This event will support 'Intelligent Racing' and we expect, though it yet to be confirmed, it will provide 4 or more British athletes per age/gender the chance to race against other nations on very technical courses in a Super League format along with having the opportunity to watch the World's leading senior athletes prepare and race over multiple events across 2 days on the same course. All athletes will receive free race suits and entry.

UK School Games - Our first Games in 2018 was a huge success giving us the chance to join the most well-established national sporting festival for young athletes of school age and 2021 sees another edition of the Games (postponed from 2020). A multi-sport event held every 2 years over 4 days the Games involves athletes from several leading sports. Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust put considerable funding into this event to give it a big 'Games' feel. Athletes live and race on site and with opening ceremony, accreditation's, team kit, etc.; the experience is deliberately designed to be very much like a Commonwealth or Olympic Games. Teams will consist of 2 girls and 2 boys representing the 10 English Regions along with Wales, Scotland and Ireland. To combat Relative Age Effect this event has been designed for athletes in school years 10 and 11 in England and Wales or for Scottish athletes competitors will need to be 15 or 16 on the 31st of August in the year of competition. This gives quarter 4 born athletes, normally the youngest in their competition year an opportunity to compete as the oldest athletes in the field. Venue restrictions and a desire to give athletes multiple racing opportunities to support 'Intelligent Racing' mean athletes will race in less traditional formats over three days. This includes an Aquathlon (heats/finals) on day 1, a bike race and bike skills test on day 2 and a mixed relay on day 3.

In the 'off' years British Triathlon is committed to supporting its own School Games. For 2019 this took place at Bryn Bach Parc running under similar principles and philosophies and for athletes of the same ages.