

SCHOOL GAMES EXPLAINED

WHAT IS THE SCHOOL GAMES?

The UK School Games, established after London's winning 2012 bid and part of the Olympic legacy, is an integrated multi-sport event for the UK's leading disabled and non-disabled young athletes of school age. The Games take place from 2 to 5 September 2021 at Loughborough University. Since a recent change in funding the event is now a biennial affair.

The event seeks to create an inspirational and motivational setting that not only provides talented young athletes with the opportunity to thrive and perform at the highest levels, but also hopes to encourage more young people to take part and succeed in sport. The Youth Sport Trust develops and organises the School Games, which is supported by National Lottery funding from Sport England.

The competition re-enforces a similar experience to the Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games complete with an Opening Ceremony (which will be virtual for 2021 due to covid restrictions) and an Athletes Village. All twelve competing sports will be hosted directly at the world-class facilities of Loughborough University campus, creating a unique multi-sport atmosphere.

After a re-vamp in 2018 Triathlon was invited to apply. In a very competitive process, with some of the more established sports not being extended an invitation moving forward, Triathlon was commended on its application. We focused on learning and development through multiple race opportunities, creative planning around event delivery, without the opportunity to swim in open water, and in looking to positively combat Relative Age Effect. After a very successful 2018 competition we have been invited back for 2021.

Other sports included for 2021 are: Athletics, Cricket, Cycling, Hockey, Judo, Modern Pentathlon, Netball, Wheelchair Tennis and Wheelchair Basketball.

TRIATHLON AT THE SCHOOL GAMES

Athletes from Scotland, Wales, England and Ireland will compete at the Games. Scotland, Wales and Ireland will compete as Home Nation Teams. English athletes will represent their Region. All teams will consist of 2 girls and 2 boys. Eligible athletes will be in Year 10 or Year 11 of the current school year (2020/2021). For athletes in Scotland, where school years are different, athletes must be 15 or 16 on 31st August 2020.

In line with the [Intelligent Racing](#) pillar of the [Athlete Development Framework](#) athletes will have the opportunity to compete across 5 events over 3 days. Due to venue constraints, and a desire to give athletes the chance to experience different triathlon related challenges to broaden their Intelligent Racing bank of knowledge, events will be of a less traditional format. There will be both an individual and team racing element to competition. Days 1 and 2 will be focused on individual racing while the emphasis will then change for Day 3 with the focus being on fast and furious team racing with the Mixed Team Relay.

Day 1 – Swim/Run Focus (Loughborough University)

Aquathlon 300m¹/2300m over a heats and A/B final format so all athletes will race twice.

Day 2 - Bike Focus (Prestwold Hall Motor Racing Circuit)

Bike Skills Figure of 8 (Dustbin) Test with bike mount/dismount

Bike Circuit Race – this will include a pursuit start² with athletes running into T1 as if exiting the swim, after T1 athletes will complete a bike race (approx. 30 mins) before coming into T2 and then running a short distance to the finish line.

The order of finish from the bike race will then decide the overall result of the individual School Games competition.

Day 3 – Mixed Team Triathlon Relay (Loughborough University)

The 2 girls and 2 boys will combine to form a 4-person team. The Relay will be run in the normal format with athletes going girl/boy/girl/boy and each athlete completing a mini triathlon before handing on. The swim will be pool based (OW format)

¹ The pool (50m) will be set in an open water format with a pontoon start, swim buoys and no lane ropes so distances are approximate

² Start times will be ordered according to results across the Aquathlon and Bike Skills Test and the race will run in pursuit format – the fastest athlete will go first with others following or chasing down the leader according to their start time.

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WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Please see the live feed (with commentary) of the Aquathlon [here](#) and the Mixed Relay [here](#) to get a flavour of what racing at the School Games will be like

RELATIVE AGE EFFECT

Given that this is a school event it makes sense to race in school year groups for the majority of the athletes concerned; all athletes (Scotland aside) have a September to August school year. There is also another important reason for Triathlon choosing to do this; Relative Age Effect (RAE). This applies to where an athlete's birthday falls in the competitive year. In Triathlon the competitive year is from January to December. Athletes born earlier in the competition year are more likely to be more physically developed, and in sports like Triathlon where physical maturation plays a part consequently are at an advantage. Such athletes are more likely therefore to be selected to teams and be given additional opportunities e.g. higher quality competition, better coaching etc. As athletes develop into senior racing this only serves to widen the disparity between those born earlier or later in the year and means it is more likely to continue into adult racing. This is the case in our sport where there is a very significant RAE in senior men's racing especially. Further down the Pathway, from our recent data collection, we have found that there is a slight RAE in British Youth and Junior Triathlon in girls racing and a far more profound one for boys. Therefore it makes sense for us to take proactive steps to support an athlete with a birthday in Q4, who are most the most under represented, with improved competitive opportunities.

In looking at RAE it is usual to group athletes in the four quarters of the year. In Triathlon quarter 1 (Q1) athletes are born in Jan/Feb/Mar and Q4 athletes are born in Oct/Nov/Dec. It is the Q4's who are most under represented at the front of races and also most under represented in senior male racing. Grouping athletes in English/Welsh School years support us in giving Q4's a much-needed opportunity to be the oldest in their competitive age group.

A further effort to combat RAE is in place with Regional Academy selection. Currently Academies in England And Wales select by age on 1st September which also favours Q4's while Scotland pay special attention to Q4's when conducting their selections.

SELECTION POLICY

It is important to note that School Games age groups cross over British Youth and Junior age groups. More information on the School Games Selection Policy can be found within Junior Selection Policies [here](#)