

Edinburgh Synchro coaching philosophy and selection process 2022



Coaching philosophy

“Our coaching philosophy is to build a culture of learning, professionalism, commitment, challenge and independence. Synchronised swimming is fundamentally a team sport. We will champion a positive, respectful and hardworking attitude, the ability to work as a team and appreciate each team member, in order for each individual to become the best synchronised swimmer they can be.”

We hope that this will not only help support all athletes in becoming the best synchronised swimmer they can be but will also develop life skills that will serve them in their future lives beyond synchronised swimming.

How can we all support this philosophy?

Coaches:

- Championing best efforts*
- Communication with athletes and parents
- Holding team building exercises
- Providing opportunities for independent learning
- Providing an environment for learning and challenge
- Planning, reflecting and evaluating training and competitions

Athletes:

- Commitment to attendance
- Championing best efforts*
- Communication with the coaches
- Open to and ready for learning and challenge

Parents:

- Supporting the commitment to attendance
- Championing best efforts*
- Communication with athletes and coaches
- Providing opportunities for independent learning

**‘Best efforts’ refers to: concentration, positive attitude, work ethic and trying to achieve the best outcomes for each session.*

Selection process

It is the club’s aim that every swimmer will have the opportunity to swim in at least one competition every year. This means that the club will ensure that all swimmers are in a combination team. Combination teams in the recreational category will be determined by grade level. Competitive combinations will come only from the age group squads. Age group swimmers will also have the opportunity to swim in a free team and in duets and solos, but there may be a selection process for each of these.

Selections for routines and squads is one of the most challenging areas for athletes, coaches and parents. An understanding of the process and criteria is crucial for all parties. This is the purpose of this document.

The information below is intended as general guidance for coaches, parents and athletes with regards to selection.

1. Selection to age group squad

All swimmers with the required grade for the Scottish Nationals figure / team section will be invited to be in the squad at the beginning of the year. They must be able to train with the required intensity and commitment. They can decide to remain in a recreational team if they do not wish to be in the squad.

There may be an opportunity to move into a squad after the first grade assessment day of the year. It will not be possible to move into a squad after the second grade assessment day as it is too late in the year to start learning routines.

Each age group squad will be working on a free team (if there are enough swimmers), a combination routine, duets and solos. The primary routine is the free team. All swimmers must put their best efforts* into this routine. If a swimmer is struggling with more than one routine, they could decide not to do a duet or solo, or even the combination routine. However, if they decide that the free team is not for them they must withdraw from the age group squad and move to a recreational group. The club has a large recreational section and it is not seen as a negative to move into it. It may also be necessary due to an increase in other commitments or an injury, for example.

2. Selection for competition

The purpose of selections is to try to achieve an optimum performance and development of skills in a target competition.

2.1 Selection for the free team

For each competition the scenario of the team, swimmers, routine and external factors are completely unique. Therefore it is crucial that coaches draw upon their experience and expertise to make the decision they feel is appropriate, based on these factors, and the selection criteria below. It is likely that different combinations of swimmers will swim in the team at different competitions.

In training before selections, swimmers may alternate in and out of pattern. We encourage alternating places in training to develop more skills (picking up counts and patterns quickly, adaptability) and provide everyone the opportunity to practice the routine in pattern. Please be aware that the ability to alternate is a skill, and that places in training do not necessarily indicate places at a competition.

2.2 Selection to final ten

If there are more than ten swimmers in an age group squad, the figure scores so far that year will be ranked and normally the top ten will be selected as the final ten to be entered into the competition for the free team. Please note that injury, illness, exams, etc may mean that someone in the top ten is not able to compete and will be excluded from the selection.

2.3 Selection to final eight

The decision as to who will be in the team at the competition will be based on the following criteria:

Figures, including recent performance in figures in training and competitions (this makes up 50% of a total score at Age Group competitions). *NB. In a Senior or combination event this will not be considered as the routine is 100% of the score.*

Routine skills in training, competition and selection swims (this makes up the other 50% of the total score at Age Group competitions) including:

- Height in figures
- Height in eggbeater and head first boosts
- Manner of presentation
- Pattern awareness
- Accuracy and sharpness of movement
- Synchronisation
- Flexibility
- Fitness
- Highlights, such as lifts
- Extension

Personal skills: Contribution to a positive team dynamic, attendance, positive attitude, work ethic, ability to make corrections quickly, concentration and trying to achieve the best outcomes for each session.

The three above areas will be evaluated when deciding which swimmers will perform.

Following a selection, athletes will be informed as quickly as possible as to whether they have been selected. If not selected, the coaches will communicate their individual strengths and main areas to develop, to understand what they need to do to be selected in future.

The decision will be made by the team coaches and the Head Coach. Their decision is final regarding any selection decision and any amendments.

Following selection, best efforts* must be made in training sessions. If lack of attendance or effort becomes detrimental to a routine, a change in selection may be required. The team can change up to the day of competition.

2.4 Reserves

Reserves will be expected to fully commit to training. They will be expected to attend competitions if there is a figure section. If there is not a figure section one reserve is expected to attend the competition, although both are welcome to attend for their development.

There is a lot of learning that takes place as a reserve athlete and it can really cement skills that help the swimmer in the following competition / year.

Reserve swimmers train and prepare in exactly the same way as the rest of the team because they are part of the team. Reserve swimmers are some of the most important members in the team. They need to know the counts to multiple places in the routine. This means in training they will swap in and out of different places and become experts in the patterns and counts.

If one swimmer is injured / ill at a competition, the reserve athlete is needed to swim their place. This ensures that the team can swim their routine as choreographed and not incur a 0.5 point penalty. This is quite a common occurrence.

Reserve swimmers experience the competition in the same way as the rest of the team – training, walking through and preparation right up until the swim, and they stand next to the coaches during the performance to show that they are part of the team that contributed towards this. They gain lots of experience by being at the competition.

Reserve swimmers may receive medals if the team is awarded one, because they are considered a crucial part of the performance.

Duets and solos

Competitions differ in their duet and solo entry criteria. Some have a maximum number per club or age group, some need to qualify based on their figure score at the competition. The club views duets as more important than solos.

Duets and soloists need to choreograph their own routine in all age groups. Unfortunately coaching time is very limited and the majority of the coach's time must be spent on the team routines and figures / elements. As well as some duet and solo coaching time, the club aims to provide some sessions for swimmers to work on their own or with a poolside volunteer but this cannot be guaranteed. It is therefore recommended that duets and solos are also worked on in the swimmers' own time. Coaches will determine the appropriate allocation of their coaching time for each upcoming competition and will communicate that to the swimmers. At the beginning of the year the coaches will determine what is needed for each competition and will discuss with each swimmer whether they would like to do a duet and / or solo, and what the likelihood is of them getting a swim during the year.

Duet pairings will be based on:

- age
- figures, routine skills and personal skills (as above)
- how well the swimmers match whilst performing
- the availability of the swimmer to attend training sessions and work together outwith training

Swimmers do not have to take up the opportunity to do a duet or solo. For some swimmers having a free routine and a combination routine is enough.