

BAGCATS EXPLAINED!!!

BAGCATS stands for **British Age Group CATEgories** and applies to boys aged 9 to 14 and girls aged 9 to 13.

Over the year, there are three standard competitions, in which the system is used, County, Regional and National.

County BAGCATS

Also commonly known as the “Derbyshires”, held across three weekends in February/March within a short course (25m) pool.

There are entry times for this competition that may be achieved at any meet (gala).

Age range for this competition is Boys 9-14 and Girls 9-13.

As you would expect, the entry times for each competition gets progressively tougher through the County, Regional and National competitions.

* The ASA run a system for licencing open meets. Depending on the quality of the pool, timing equipment and officials, a meet may be granted a Level 1, 2, 3 or 4.

The swimmers age in each competition is as at the last day of each competition. It may therefore be that a swimmer is in the 12 year old category for County BAGCATS and 13 year old for Regionals and Nationals. Until recently all competitions were based on age as at 31st Dec which clearly benefited swimmers with birthdays early in the year. The newer system of age on day removes this advantage and allows all swimmers to be nearer the older end of their age group for at least one of the three competitions.

BAGCATS is a points system for establishing who the best swimmers really are within their age group at a particular competition. It also promotes swimmers competing in a variety of strokes in accordance with Long Term Athlete Development. **Success is Long Term** is an asa document that fully explains Long Term Athlete Development related to the Journey through Swimming.

In the days before BAGCATS, these younger swimmers would compete at County, Regional and National level against each other in individual events. So, at National level there would be a boy's 13 year 100m Freestyle champion, a boy's 13 year 400m Individual Medley champion etc. But who is the champion of champions? The medley swimmer surely because he is good at all strokes; but what if the 100m freestyler swam the fastest ever in the country for a 13 year old – wouldn't he be better?

So – along came BAGCATS. For every race that a BAGCAT swimmer competes in at each County, Regional and National Championships, they will be awarded BAGCAT points depending on their age group, how fast they swam, the stroke and distance. How these points are arrived at is a science in itself, based on world records and all sorts of clever stuff and it's probably easier to not to even attempt to understand! However, what it is important to know is that generally the tougher and longer distance events will give more points than the shorter easier ones.

Now every swim has points, are they just added together? No – that would be too easy and would just mean that the swimmer with more swims is likely to win. So, the swimming events are divided into categories each of which has their own individual way of testing the swimmer.

Categories vary slightly depending on the swimmer age and whether at County, Regional or National level but essentially fall into the following groups,

- 1. Freestyle** – All swimmers are expected to be proficient at this stroke and this therefore has its own category – Distances are 200m 400m 800m or 1,500m depending on age (see Entry Form).
- 2. Form Stroke** – Either butterfly, backstroke or breaststroke. Every swimmer is expected to be particularly proficient in something other than freestyle. Distances are always 200m.
- 3. Sprints** – All strokes. Distances are 50m for County, 100m for Regional and National. This tests the swimmers sprinting ability.
- 4. Medley** – All swimmers are expected to be able to swim all strokes. Distances are 100m, 200m and 400m for County and 200m and 400m for Regional / National.
- 5. 100's** – An additional sprint category for short course County BAGCATS only, depending on age (see Entry Form).

Success is Long Term includes the specific detail of the BAGCAT categories across all ages and competition levels.

Points for each swim are assigned to the relevant category but it is always the HIGHEST points only that go towards the total of the five added together. So if a swimmer gets 315 points from a 200 backstroke and then gets 330 points from a 200 breaststroke, then only the 330 points from the breaststroke swim will stand in the Form Stroke category.

In order to compete for top positions in the overall BAGCAT competition, it is therefore essential that the swimmer enters events in all 4/5 categories, depending on age (see Entry Form).

The importance of doing well in overall BAGCAT scoring cannot be over-emphasised. British Swimming's talent ID programme will always look at BAGCAT rankings rather than individual event winners, this being a clear indication that these competitors are more likely to develop into better swimmers.

So why is this system only used for swimmers up to 14 year old boys and 13 year old girls?

Most importantly it is to ensure that swimmers do not specialise in one stroke at an early age. A swimmer's best stroke at age 9 may not necessarily be their best stroke one or two years later and the BAGCAT system with its requirement to swim Medleys is specifically designed to accommodate this. The Form Stroke category also ensures that variety is maintained by swimmers having to be proficient at more than one stroke.

When swimmers move into their mid to late teens, their bodies become fully developed (girls sooner than boys – hence the difference in BAGCAT upper ages) and they should start to specialise in strokes and distances. Therefore beyond BAGCAT ages, swimmers will compete at County, Regional and National events at individual events.

Just a final word of warning A summary of BAGCAT points and age group placings are issued at regular intervals throughout competitions. If you find you are near the top places at any point BEWARE of the swimmer who has not yet swum in a category and leaves it until the last session to add a few hundred points to their total. It is a very fair system – but it can be cruel!!

TABLE OUTLINING THE CATEGORIES FOR AWARDING POINTS

	BOYS		GIRLS	
9 YRS	SPRINT	Best 50m	SPRINT	Best 50m
	FORM	Best 200m Back, Breast, or Fly	FORM	Best 200m Back, Breast, or Fly
	DISTANCE	200m Free	DISTANCE	200m Free
	IM	Best 100m or 200m	IM	Best 100m or 200m
10 YRS	SPRINT	Best 50m	SPRINT	Best 50m
	FORM	Best 200m Back, Breast, or Fly	FORM	Best 200m Back, Breast, or Fly
	DISTANCE	Best 200m or 400m Free	DISTANCE	Best of 200m or 400m Free
	IM	Best 100m or 200m	IM	Best 100m or 200m
11 YRS	SPRINT	Best 50m	SPRINT	Best 50m
	FORM	Best 200m Back, Breast, or Fly	FORM	Best 200m Back, Breast, or Fly
	DISTANCE	Best 200m, 400m, 800m Free	DISTANCE	Best of 200m, 400m, 800m or 1500 Free
	IM	Best 100m or 200m	IM	Best 100m or 200m
12 YRS	SPRINT	Best 50m	SPRINT	Best 50m
	FORM	Best 200m Back, Breast, or Fly	FORM	Best 200m Back, Breast, or Fly
	DISTANCE	Best 200m, 400m, 800m or 1500m Free	DISTANCE	Best of 200m, 400m, 800m or 1500m Free
	IM	Best 100m, 200m, or 400m	IM	Best 100m, 200m, or 400m
	100's	Best 100m	100's	Best 100m
13 YRS	SPRINT	Best 50m	SPRINT	Best 50m
	FORM	Best 200m Back, Breast, or Fly	FORM	Best 200m Back, Breast, or Fly
	DISTANCE	Best 200m, 400m, 800m or 1500m Free	DISTANCE	Best of 200m, 400m, 800m or 1500m Free
	IM	Best 100m, 200m, or 400m	IM	Best 100m, 200m, or 400m
	100's	Best 100m	100's	Best 100m
14 YRS	SPRINT	Best 50m		
	FORM	Best 200m Back, Breast, or Fly		
	DISTANCE	Best 200m, 400m, 800m or 1500m Free		
	IM	Best 100m, 200m, or 400m		
	100's	Best 100m		

Changes to BAGCAT Point Scoring in Competitions from 1 January 2010

The ASA Swimming Committee has agreed that from January 1 2010, all ASA events will use the FINA Points tables for scoring purposes in competitions in place of the GB points system.

BAGCATS scoring has been retained, but the point calculations are computed using FINA Points and the Age Factors are no longer used to adjust each age group's points.

Comparative Performance Points Tables have been used in the UK since the 1970s in order to compare swimming times across the standard range of strokes and distances. British Swimming has used LEN (the European Governing Body) and more recently, FINA (the World Governing Body) tables. Both of these are based on world performances and reflect the parity between events at the top level of the sport. These have been used for scoring major open team competitions and are accepted by the swimming community as provision of a fair comparison across the range of events.

Initially, the internationally used points systems, described above, did not go down far enough, so when the tables were applied to age group swimming, especially at the younger ages, the value of the comparisons across events became less valid. In order to provide suitable tables, a system of GB points was created, which was based on both international standards and information from the database of British swimming.

This GB points system also included 'Age Correction Factors' which reflected the different achievement levels as a consequence of age-related physical development of young swimmers. These correction factors used in conjunction with GB points were particularly dependent on an annual analysis from GB ranking of the times swum by 9-14 year old swimmers. Over the past 10 years since the introduction of British Age Group Categories and the recognition through Long Term Athlete Development of the need for young swimmers to compete in longer distance events, the number of times in the rankings for 9-14 year olds has significantly increased, and recent comparisons show that there is now no statistical requirement for Age Correction Factors.

Over recent years, the FINA points system has been extended, and the general access to this information has improved, so it is now considered appropriate to use these tables. There are separate short course and long course tables and the base times for 1,000 points in each event are recalculated every year, based on the average of the top ten of the All Time World Rankings. As from January 2010, there will be no further separate GB points system and all ASA events will use the FINA Points tables.

An added advantage will be that, by using FINA points with no amendments, swimmers' times can now be compared across age groups, which was not previously possible. So, whatever age a swimmer is, their time will score the same number of points.