

PATHWAY RACING EXPLAINED

With both international and domestic events there is a lot of racing that happens each season. On top of 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

For guidance on which races athletes of different levels should be targeting throughout the season, please refer to the Competition Maps available below:

- [Youth A Competition Map](#)
- [Youth B Competition Map](#)
- [Junior Competition Map](#)

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.

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 three 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 and build athletes and bank of **Intelligent Racing** knowledge - this includes:

- **Swim** – Swim courses will vary throughout the Super Series offering a range of beach, pontoon and deep water starts. Some courses may only be one lap while others will have multiple laps and include an Australian style exit/entrance between laps.
- **Bike** – Bike courses will also vary across the season. Some courses are flat; some offer a rolling terrain. Courses will also vary in degrees of technical difficulty, encouraging athletes to develop their bike handling skills.
- **Run** – Run courses at Super Series events range from flat to hilly. Again, the courses will range in technicality with some being long and straight, and others more technical with lots of turns.
- **Transition** – Known as the fourth discipline, transition requires its own skillset. Some transition areas at Super Series events will be short and compact and others much larger, some with short runs between disciplines and others much longer.
- **Different formats** – Traditional triathlon events plus events with heats and finals and/or less traditional race formats along with the addition of mixed relays and aquathlons.
- **Geographical Spread** - Where possible events are spread around the country to decrease overall travel load. 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 considerably more expensive to promote than non-drafting age group events. We are also limited by the number of affordable venues that can offer closed road racing, along with a swim-able lake, and availability to fit with our busy racing schedule.

PATHWAY RACING EXPLAINED

AQUATHLON

Aquathlons were re-introduced into the Super Series in 2021, 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 in a group, when to move up, 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** – Prior to the Covid pandemic, we were seeing a decline in swimming standards. This, combined with the closure of pools during the pandemic resulting in a lot of athletes missing significant amounts of swimming during a key stage in their development, has resulted in the need for us to focus on collectively raising the standard of swimming across the pathway.
3. **To Make the Sport More Accessible** – Having events in the Super Series each year without cycling makes entry to the sport far more accessible for new athletes, especially talented swim/runners.

The Aquathlons will be hosted at a North and a South venue, with athletes being expected to attend one or the other depending on their region. 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;

- **Race 1** - 700-800m swim / 1km run (Junior) – 1km run (Youth)
- **Race 2** - 400-500m swim / 2km run (Junior) – 1.5km run (Youth)
- **Race 3** - 200-300m swim / 3km run (Junior) – 2km run (Youth)

Racing over varying distances will create different racing scenarios, especially in the water, requiring a variety of tactics to be employed and new decisions to be made. This will in turn promote the skill development and encourage the intelligent swimming that we are looking for. The multi-race format also ensures athletes are given an opportunity to go through 3 separate learning cycles of planning, doing and then reviewing. 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, each event will carry normal Super Series points. The following Regions will attend the following venues:

North (Lochore) – **Scotland, North West, North East, Yorkshire**

South (Worcester) – **East, South West, South Central, South East, London**

The central regions – **Wales and Midlands** - will have a choice of either going to the North or South event as best fits their race schedule and location.

MIXED RELAY & SHORT FORMAT RACING

Shorter distance racing is becoming more and more part of the sport – both in relay and other formats e.g., Eliminator, which World Triathlon are pushing to become part of the Olympic programme in 2028. As such, it is important that we support athletes by exposing them to the necessary racing experiences to develop the skill sets required to succeed in short course racing. We are doing this through a number of events in the current Super Series, specifically at the Mallory and Eton events:

Mallory offers a heats and finals format along with the British Mixed Relay Championships too. The heats will take place as a non-drafting individual time trial (ITT); this will support athletes to gain experience at time trialling, important in the latter stages of a relay when the field has usually split. The final will be draft legal and over a similar distance to the European Youth, Junior and U23 championships, providing a good short format experience as well as help us to select teams for each of the three championships.

After the success of the eliminator event at **Eton** this summer, we will run a similar format again this year with a slight twist. While the elimination element mirrors World Triathlon's format, we are also (weather conditions permitting) going to mix up the race order in similar fashion to a Super League Triple Mix. This gives athletes with strengths in running and riding a chance to race positively at the front of the field from the start, and plays to our overall Mixed Relay philosophy of front foot racing (e.g., athletes taking the initiative and looking to dominate by racing fearlessly and positively from the front).

PATHWAY RACING EXPLAINED

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

We categorise international competition into three stages each looking to build on the previous and 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, Bled ET Junior Cup and all other non-supported ET 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 the European Junior Championships, European Youth Olympics, European Youth Championships, and high-level ET Junior Cups (Quarteira and Caorle).

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.

BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL AGE GROUPS

International age groups are different to British age groups and in addition World Triathlon/ Europe Triathlon age groups at Junior and Youth levels overlap too.

| Age | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
|-----------------|---------|----|---------|--------|----|
| WT/ET Junior | | | | | |
| WT/ET Youth | | | | | |
| GB Age Groups | Youth A | | Youth B | Junior | |
| GB Youth Teams | | | | | |
| GB Junior Teams | | | | | |

Our philosophy throughout the Pathway at all racing age groups and stages, right through to the World Class Podium programme, revolves around athletes performing to the highest levels (medalling) in their designated international age group or racing stage before moving up. For example, 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 three teams, and the racing load across the three Championships and the designated selection events is heavy. 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. [Selection Policies](#) are available on the British Triathlon website under 'Junior Selection Policies'. Its important athletes read the selection policies thoroughly as some championships require athletes to nominate for consideration prior to a deadline.

INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

World Junior Championships - 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.

European Junior Championships - Also held annually, 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.

European Youth Championships - 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 Olympic Games and European Youth Olympic Festival – EYOF is held biennially, while YOG is held every four years. Triathlon has been invited into the EYOF although the Triathlon event itself was unfortunately cancelled in 2022. The next scheduled Youth Olympics that we are aware of being in Dakar (Senegal) 2026.

PATHWAY RACING EXPLAINED

EUROPE TRIATHLON JUNIOR CUPS

ET Junior Cups – Europe Triathlon hold a series of Junior Cup races across Europe throughout the year for athletes aged 16-19. To be eligible for consideration, athletes will need to satisfy the [2023 ET Junior Cup Selection Policy](#) to demonstrate they are developmentally ready for the experience and nominate themselves prior to a deadline, as outlined in the policy. Junior Cups 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. If a race is ‘supported’, British Triathlon will send a staff team to the event and centrally organise accommodation and trip logistics for athletes. At the time of publication this season's supported events will be:

- **Quarteira (26th March)**
- **Caorle (12th- 14th May)**
- **The French Aquathlon Championships (8th - 9th July)**

Athletes are also able to nominate themselves for the other ET Junior Cups but will have to organise their own travel/accommodation etc. More information about the Junior Cup calendar can be found in the ET Junior Cup Selection Policy or on the [Events Section](#) of the World Triathlon or Europe Triathlon websites.

UK SCHOOL GAMES

The Games involves athletes from several leading sports and Sport England, via the Youth Sport Trust, put considerable funding into the 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. 2023 is on 'off' year for School Games with the next event scheduled for 2024.