Virtual Meets Support for Clubs and Coaches

Back to the Water COVID-19

Contents

1.0   Introduction

This document is intended to support coaches and clubs in designing and using virtual meets. In addition, the document highlights how these meets could evolve from the measurement of simple skills and short races as a part of a training session through to virtual competition on a national scale. Club organised virtual meets that take place during regular training sessions are not licensed and cannot be accredited.   All activities held in training sessions must take in to account the risk assessment and operational procedures agreed with the pool provider.

Virtual meets allow different swimming clubs and teams to compete with and against each other while conveniently staying in their own home pool. Essentially, a range of events are agreed upon, then performed according to agreed conditions, on an agreed date, or within agreed date parameters. Results are collected, shared, and then combined to determine the winners. In most circumstances this is simply based on trust.

2.0 Why have virtual meets?

Conditions put in place to ensure a safe environment, and the time available, may limit the opportunity for competition as we go "Back to the Water". As a result, the activities that can take place and the number of competitors that can be in the facility may be restricted. At first, it is expected that there will only be limited capacity for meet management and officiating, with little opportunity to spectate.

The key benefits of virtual meets on our return to competition are that they are very versatile and adaptable. Compliance with all [1]COVID-19 guidance (current at the time of the meet) is essential, and virtual meets lend themselves well to this because they are in effect "in house", meaning –

- **The number of swimmers is controllable**
- **Changes can be made at short notice**
- **There is limited physical interaction with others outside of training group**
- **They require little or no travel**
- **Can be arranged or cancelled at short notice**
- **Can be tailored to meet individual needs**
    - **Managed within a training session**
    - **Carried out in a short time frame**
    - **Have events that can be tailored to suit the stage of return of each club**

As we progress further down the path towards more normal training and racing, clubs will need to consider the frequency of competition to achieve the [2]balance between training and competition that suits their athletes.

Clubs may want to continue to include virtual meets in their meet calendars when COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, because as well as the benefits listed above, they are a great way of maintaining connections and providing healthy competition between clubs, no matter how distant or remote. You can compete against any other club in the world!

3.0 First steps before any virtual meet

The simplest virtual meet is not a meet at all. It is a simple comparison of performances or activities that have taken place during training sessions in different places or at different times.
To make the comparison fair however, certain conditions need to be the same (or similar), so need to be agreed beforehand. This is true for virtual meets of all levels.

Example conditions

- **Date, time and duration of sessions (no need to be synchronized or "live")**
- **Length of pool**
- **Diving/diving blocks**
- **Events/Order of events**
- **Age of competitors (can be open)**
- **Experience of competitors**
- **Number of events per competitor**
- **Officiating – yes, no, roles, how many?**
- **Technical rules to be applied**
- **Manner of timing or counting**
- **How individual winners/rankings will be determined**
- **How club/team winners/rankings will be determined**
- **Recording and scoring method (text, excel or [3]Hy-Tek can be used)**
- **Collating of results/scoring**
- **Dissemination of results**

4.0 Earliest virtual meets

Earliest virtual meets to focus on processes and avoid traditional distances

Simple format for competition between two clubs or teams (Dual Meets)

Building engagement and focusing on fun and enjoyment as the member of a team is the first step for a Return to Competition. It is recommended that the competition focuses on the process of racing (not time) and may require individual age-groups, limited event orders, and new or simplified use of technology to reduce the reliance on officials.

Anything that can be timed or measured can be included as an event. Diving from blocks and relays may not be permitted at all or may be restricted.

Example events

- **25m Free (or Fly, Back, Breast or Kick etc)**
- **10m in to a wall and 10m out with a turn**
- **75m Free (or Fly, Back, Breast or Kick etc)**
- **Streamline for measured distance from a push**
- **Number of kicks or pulls per length**
- **Efficiency and Rate Drills or Swim Golf (for other ideas see [4]Off The Blocks)**

Possible restrictions

- **Likely to be no diving from blocks**
- **Times achieved would be only for comparison and not verifiable**
- **May be limited application of technical rules**
- **Recommended for just two clubs or teams**
- **Group swimmers by sex, age or previous experience for fair competition**

Management of the virtual meet

- **Meet Convenor (can be a coach) to have agreed order of events and conditions**
- **The [5]lead official (who does not need to be a qualified referee and can be a coach) bring their own whistle and other equipment**
- **Recorder to bring own recording equipment (this person does not need to be qualified)**
- **Senior swimmers could support the management of the meet**

Meet Convenor to ensure what was agreed is what happens and that results are shared with the other club.

5.0 Next steps in virtual meets

Following on from earliest virtual meets introducing traditional swim events

Retain simple format between two clubs or teams (Dual Meets)

The development of skill and technique will continue to be the focus as training becomes established. Racing over short distances in an intra-club competition during training sessions, including virtual comparison of individual and team results, can be used to aid that development.

Example events

- **As for Earliest Virtual Meets**
- **50m Free, Fly, Back, Breast**
- **100m IM**
- **100m Free**

Possible restrictions

- **Likely to be the same as for Earliest Virtual Meets**

Management of the virtual meet

- **Likely to be the same as for Earliest Virtual Meets**

Meet Convenor to work with [5]lead official to confirm adherence to conditions and ensure results are shared with the other clubs and wider, if they are to be used for entry into meets where conditions allow.

Tighinn Còmhla

The sharing of results for comparison and competition throughout Scotland and beyond can be managed through Tighinn Còmhla at this stage and beyond. Times swum in virtual meets or from a single stop-watch time as a part of a training session can be submitted to District administrators for central collation and publishing.

For full information about Tighinn Còmhla see https://www.scottishswimming.com/clubs/covid-19-guidance

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5 They do not have to be a qualified referee unless the agreed conditions require it.

6.0 Established virtual meets and leagues

Later a range of different virtual meets can be introduced, expanding duals to multi-club/team events and leagues

Suggested league format competition between several clubs or teams

Diving from blocks and relays may be permitted. A higher level of verification of times achieved may be possible although officiating is likely to still be limited.

Clubs are invited to 'opt-in' to take part in the league, which is separated into three age categories, i.e. each age category is a separate league. Clubs compete in groups (divisions) of 6 against each other on a weekly dual meet schedule. After 5 group matches over 5 weeks, the final week (week 6) has the 'play-offs', with 1st and 2nd ranked teams against each other to determine the overall champion (and likewise for teams ranked 3rd/4th and 5th/6th. Clubs placing 1st and 6th are promoted and relegated accordingly. There would then be a 2-week break, after which the next season recommences.

The scheduling of matches week by week maintains constant interest and friendly rivalry. And the seasons can repeat and last for as long as teams wish to take part.

Example schedule of events

10 years & under	11-14 years	15 years & over
Girls & Boys events of:	Girls & Boys events of:	Girls & Boys events of:
4 x 25m Medley Relay	4 x 50m Medley Relay	4 x 50m Medley Relay
25m Breaststroke	50m Freestyle	50m Freestyle
25m Butterfly	50m Backstroke	50m Backstroke
100m IM	50m Breaststroke	50m Breaststroke
25m Freestyle Kick	50m Butterfly	50m Butterfly
Dive Glide (for distance)	100m IM	150m 3 Stroke IM (no Free)
50m Freestyle	50m Freestyle Kick	50m Freestyle Kick
50m Backstroke	25m Underwater Kick	25m Underwater Kick
100m Freestyle	100m Backstroke	100m Backstroke
4 x 25m Freestyle Relay	100m Breaststroke	100m Breaststroke
	100m Butterfly	100m Butterfly
	150m Freestyle	250m Freestyle
	4 x 50m Freestyle Relay	4 x 50m Freestyle Relay
Total events = 20	Total events = 26	Total events = 26

Example conditions

- **Clubs must commit to holding their own 'races' at any time within their training week from Monday to Saturday**
- **Clubs can conduct their races however they wish, with as few or many swimmers as wished and permitted. Only the top two timed swims for each event are submitted to the league**
- **In the 10/under league a swimmer can compete in a maximum of 2 individual swims and both relays**
- **In the 11-14 and 15/over leagues a swimmer can compete in a maximum of 3 individual swims and both relays**
- **Results must be submitted to the league organiser no later than Sunday each week**
- **Races are timed manually as accurately as possible by coaches or volunteer helpers. Electronic timing is not required but can be used if desired where clubs have access**

- **If clubs share pool time for training sessions and both want to enter the league, then taking turns about for heats is acceptable but swimming together in the same heat (as a race) is not**
- **[5]Lead officials (may be coaches) are the arbiters of the accuracy of results and are trusted to report honestly. Any swimmer observed breaking a technical rule (according to those agreed for the virtual meet) should not be included in the results**

Example scoring

- **4 competitors per virtual race (2 from each club)**
- **Scoring 4-3-2-1 points from fastest to slowest**
- **Relays (2 per club per relay race) score double, i.e. 8-6-4-2 points**
- **Team with most number of points scores a 'Win'**
- **Number of 'Wins' determines league order (tied positions separated by cumulative match scores)**
- **In the event of a tied overall points result, the 'Win' will be determined by the team with the best combined points total from the two relay events**

Possible restrictions

- **Diving and blocks may now be permitted**
- **Minimum standards of officiating could be introduced by agreement – eg [5]lead official qualified to J2 or above with further officials as and when restrictions permit**
- **Times could be collected and used for entry into other meets**

Management of the virtual meet

- **Meet or league organised by Meet Convenors (can be coaches), or a league organiser (could be the District or Regional Manager)**
- **Meet Convenor to have agreed order of events and conditions**
- **The [5]lead official bring their own whistle and other equipment**
- **Recorder to bring own recording equipment**

Meet Convenor to work with [5]lead official to confirm adherence to conditions and ensure results are shared with the other clubs and wider, if to be used for entry into meets where conditions allow.

7.0 Virtual national events

The final tier for virtual meets could be national events taking the form of a single day overall national team championships or an individual championships format

Suggested national competitions for all clubs

As we progress further "Back to the Water", virtual national events could be introduced. Diving from blocks and relays would be required. A higher level of verification of times achieved may be possible although officiating may still be limited.

7.1 Team championships format

Clubs invited to 'opt-in' to take part in a single day team championship event, which could be separated into two age categories to allow for mass engagement, i.e. each age category is a separate championship. Alternatively, both or either team championship could have no restriction on the number of team entries.

Example schedule of events (events subject to change according to COVID-19 restrictions)

Under 17 years at 31 December	Open Age
Girls & Boys events of:	Women's & Men's events of:
4 x 50m Medley Relay	4 x 100m Mixed Free Relay
100m IM	200m IM
50m Backstroke	100m Freestyle
50m Breaststroke	100m Breaststroke
50m Butterfly	100m Butterfly
200m Freestyle	400m Freestyle
4 x 50m Mixed Medley Relay	4 x 50m Medley Relay
4 x 50m Mixed Free Relay	4 x 50m Freestyle Relay
200m IM	100m IM
50m Freestyle	100m Backstroke
400m Freestyle	200m Freestyle
4 x 50m Freestyle Relay	400m IM
	4 x 100m Mixed Medley Relay
Total events = 22	Total events = 24

Example conditions

- **Races must be held short course within club training time, or specially organised multi-club time trials (subject to COVID-19 restrictions in place at time of competition)**
- **Swimmers can compete in a maximum of 3 individual swims and all relays**
- **Results must be submitted to the competition organiser on the same day of the competition**
- **Electronic timing is preferred where possible but not compulsory where it cannot be accessed**
- **A qualified referee and judges must be present to verify the conditions and results (subject to COVID-19 restrictions)**
- **Only affiliated Scottish Swimming clubs or composite teams can take part**
- **Clubs and composite teams may enter as many teams as they wish**

- **20 competitors per virtual race (2 from each club)**
- **Scoring 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 points from fastest to slowest (only the fastest swimmer from each club scores)**
- **Relays (1 per club per relay race) score double, i.e. 20-18-16-14-12-10-8-6-4-2 points**
- **Team with most number of total cumulative points is the winner**

In the event of a tied overall points result, the 'Win' will be determined by the team with the best combined points total from the relay events.

7.2 Individual Championships format

In the event that a normal full size national championships (age groups, open, short course etc) cannot be held, swimmers take part in events on a regional basis with all results compiled centrally to determine the overall national results in each event.

Schedule of events

Normal race distances and age categories.

Example conditions

- **Races are held at designated regional venues**
- **In order to limit numbers only swimmers and officials are allowed in the building, no spectating**
- **Results are fed into a national database and published within 24 hours of the last event**
- **Electronic timing should be used**
- **Qualified STOs should be used but with lower minimum numbers than normal**
- **Only affiliated Scottish Swimming clubs or composite teams can take part**

Example scoring

The top 10/20 in each event score points as normal, which are compiled to produce an overall club/team ranking.

8.0 References

1 – For latest COVID-19 Guidance see https://www.scottishswimming.com/clubs/COVID-19-guidance

2 – For training suggestions and guidance about returning to the water see https://www.scottishswimming.com/clubs/COVID-19-guidance

3 – For instructions on using Hy-Tek to manage Virtual Meets see https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/officialsdocuments/misc-officials/virtual-meets-2020--updated.pdf

4 – For Off the Blocks see https://offtheblocks.info

5 – Lead official is used throughout to mean the individual with responsibility for the safe and fair conduct of all activities essential for the running of the virtual meet. They do not have to be a qualified referee, until national events are started, nor even a qualified swimming technical official unless it is otherwise required. In Earliest Meets and for Next Steps they would be expected to be a coach