

WHAT IS ARENA LEAGUE??

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You may have heard parents of older swimmers mention **Arena League** and wondered what we are talking about?! This is an annual interclub league sponsored by Arena (hence the name!) for English and Welsh clubs. It wasn't on in 2020 due to Covid, we didn't have capacity to enter in 2021, so it was great in 2022 to see our swimmers back competing again in this series of three loud, fast and fun evenings!

2022 saw our return to Arena League after Covid and a year out, so we started back in Division Two. However, after a strong performance we were promoted to Round One for 2023.

In 2023, BSSC finished second in Division One, which meant we were promoted to the Premier Division for the 2024/25 competition.

For 2024's League, we are swimming in the Premier Division with clubs including Watford, Hatfield, City of St Albans, Hillingdon, Teddington and Camden.



2024 Round One team at Westminster Lodge

Once the season starts in September, the coaches will select a team of swimmers to represent our club in the Arena League and our volunteer Team Managers will be in touch to start sharing information on the venue. The swimmers will compete in 42 individual events (age groups 10/11, 12/13, 14/15 & 16+ yrs based on age at 31st Dec) and relays at three separate galas, or rounds (9 year olds can be in relays).

England and Wales are split into six leagues and we compete in the London League that has three Divisions with up to 16 teams per Division (the bigger clubs may send more than one team).

As we re-entered the league in 2022 after a break, we started down in Division 2 and have been climbing our way back up to the Premier Division. Each Division competes over 3 Rounds and it works like the Peanuts league:

- **Round 1 (October):** teams from a Division are placed at random into the two different gala locations. Teams receive league points depending on their placing.
- **Round 2 (November):** teams with odd placing (first, third etc) in Round 1 will meet teams with even placings from Round 1 in the Round 2 galas. Points are again assigned based on position within the galas.
- **Round 3 (December):** the results after Round 2 split the Division, with the top six competing in gala 1 and the rest of the teams in gala 2.

Typically, at the end of Round 3 the bottom two teams in the Premier Division and Division 1 are demoted and the top two teams in Divisions 1 & 2 are promoted ready to do it all again the next October. The top two teams in the Premier Division also get to compete at National finals against all the other leagues early the following year.

Sometimes as a parent it can seem a long way to go and a lot of time to invest when all your swimmer may do is "just one length in a single relay", but the Arena league is such a great opportunity to swim as part of a team in a sport which is mainly self focused and to see the older swimmers giving it their all for the team, especially in the relays. The evenings are really exciting and great fun to be at, unless you end up sat next to someone with an air horn or cow bell!

Congratulations and good luck to all those who are selected this season! There's no restriction on which swim suits you wear, but if you have club tops and hats please wear them and be proud to represent your club. We are looking forward to reporting on three nights of great swimming and supporting (parents, we want to hear you!).



Club Captains Jakey and Freya celebrating our promotion to Division One