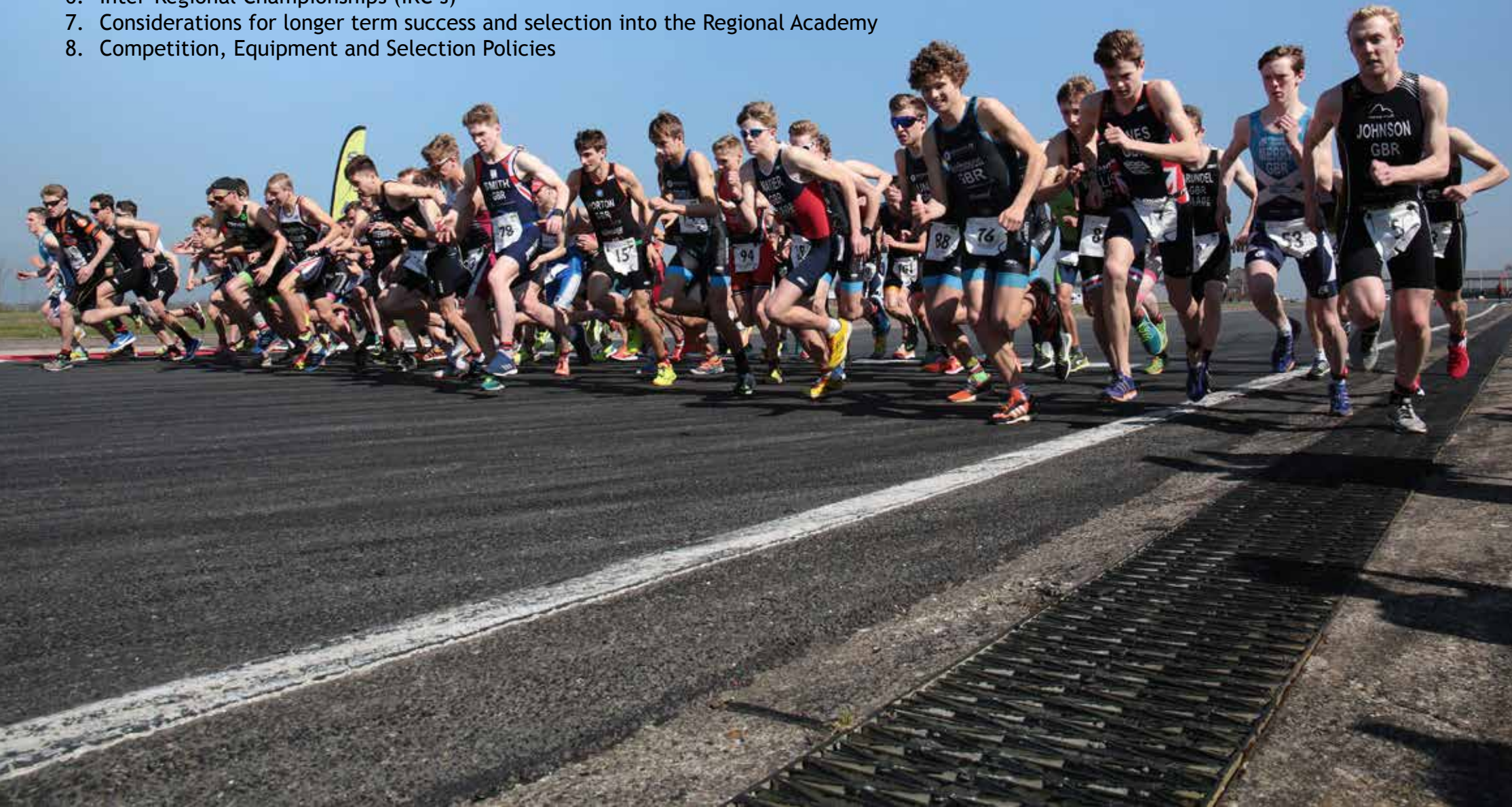


ENGLAND TALENT PROGRAMME REGIONAL ACADEMY GUIDE



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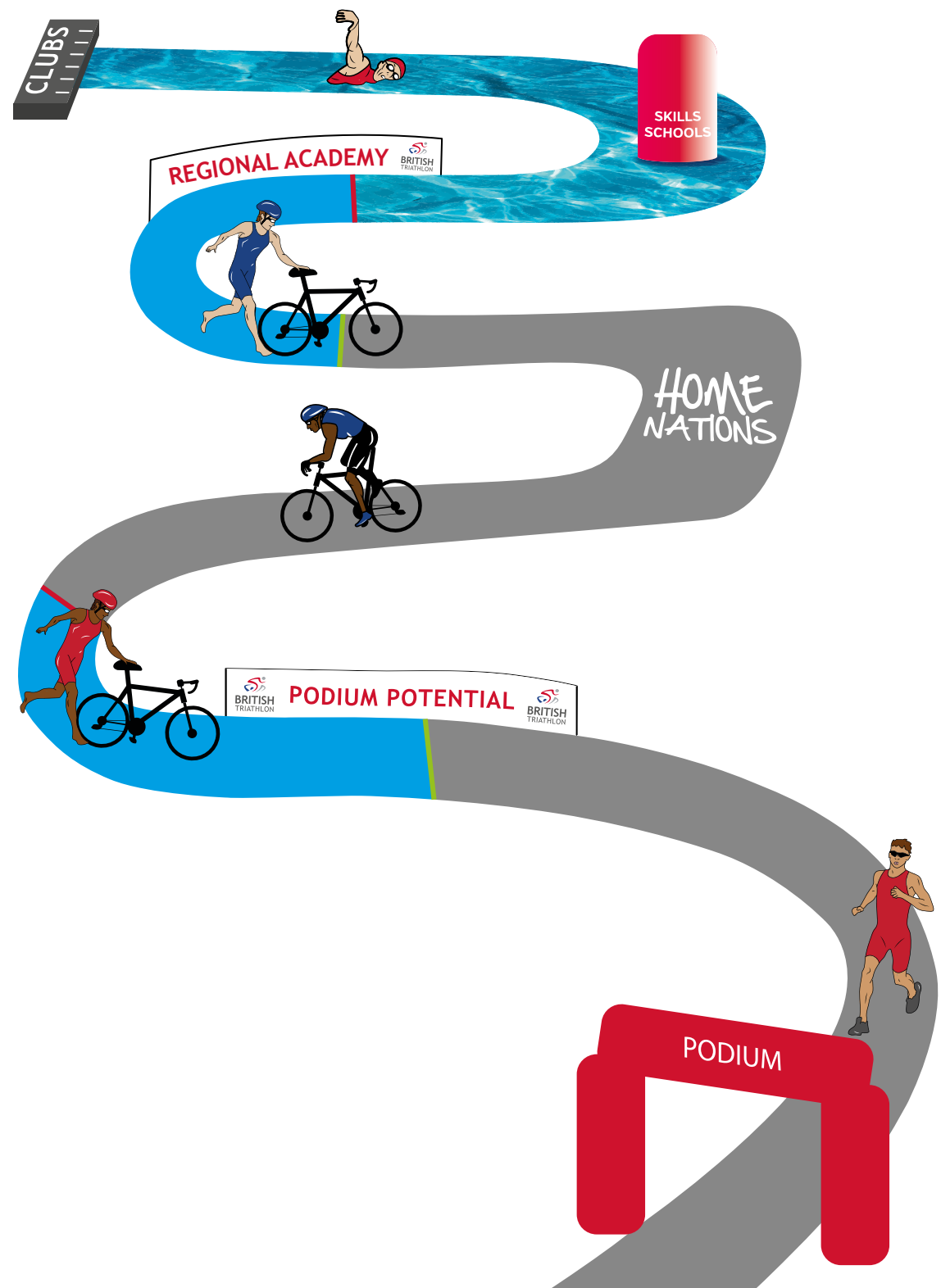
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1. The Pathway

Following on from clubs we have five steps in our Pathway

- The first is **Skills School** - Skills School is about developing independent learners and having fun. It is a blend of all that is best about both the performance and participation arms of the sport
- **Regional Academy** is the firstly purely performance focused step and is our first selective environment for athletes from the ages of 13 to 19. There are 12 Academies across Britain: 1 in Scotland, 1 in Wales and 10 in England
- **Home Nation Talent** squads contain the best developing triathletes of each Home Nation
- **Podium Potential** is the first rung of the UK Sport funded World Class Performance Programme and contains athletes who are around 8 years or closer away from the podium
- **Podium** itself is where our very best athletes reside - it is for true World leading medal winning athletes



2. What is the Regional Academy?

The role of coaches and staff working within the England Talent Programme is to support and develop athletes who may long term have the potential to achieve selection to the British Triathlon World Class Performance Programme (WCPP). Regionally, this is achieved through our Academies

The Academy is in place to provide guidance for triathlon coaches, clubs, parents and talented young athletes who aspire and have the potential to compete at the highest level within the sport of triathlon. The academy is run by a Regional Lead who is the direct link and a bridge between the region and the England Talent Programme.

Regional Academies are not designed to replace the home training environment. The goal of the Regional Academy is to create a supportive, challenging and inspiring environment to help aid and guide **Whole Athlete Development** in line with the **6 Pillars of the British Triathlon Athlete Development Framework (ADF)**. This is achieved through experiences that are above and beyond that which the athlete can access in their home training environment. Such experiences expose athletes to and allow them to explore and enhance the following:

- i. Their skills, knowledge and understanding of triathlon
- ii. Their physical, psychological and emotional capabilities and robustness
- iii. Appropriate professional behaviours
- iv. Age and stage appropriate performance standards, both domestically and internationally





3. Regional Academy Objectives

In line with the England Talent Programme and aligned to British Triathlon's ADF all Academies are working towards **Whole Athlete Development**. This is defined as developing well-rounded athletes who not only have the physical capacities for the sport but also have the problem solving and independent learning skills to make the right decisions to support both their athletic and personal development.

In working towards achieving Whole Athlete Development Academies will;

1. Identify, support and develop athletes with potential within the region through the creation of safe but challenging environments that allow athletes the space to explore and enhance their learning in the sport
2. Be a source of information for clubs, coaches, parents and athletes in the region
3. Engage, collaborate and involve coaches, parents and clubs in the region, currently working with young athletes
4. Provide experience days, camps and workshops for Academy athletes
5. Provide support, advice and signposting for athletes looking to access the England Talent programme
6. Support athletes at races, both domestically and internationally as appropriate
7. Monitor training and provide coaching support if required

4. Regional Academy - Benefits, Commitments and Expectations

Benefits

Successful athletes invited to join the Academy will benefit from:

- i. Academy training days and weekend camps throughout the year to develop experience and awareness
- ii. First class coaching and guidance in such areas as Strength and Conditioning, Open Water Swimming, Equipment Selection, Group Riding, Race Planning, Nutrition and Mental Preparation
- iii. Remote support and advice between Academy meetings.
- iv. Support at Youth and Junior Super Series Events
- v. Opportunity to attend Academy Training Camps*, these may be domestic or internationally based.
- vi. Academy kit

* The cost of any Regional Academy Training camps or associated activities may be subsidised by support from the Regional Committee, the Regional Academy or other funding sources (if available), however, you will likely be required to make a financial contribution.



Commitments and Expectations

Regional Leads work hard to create “**add value**” training days/camps for all Academy athletes and full attendance is an expectation. There is an understanding that athletes have busy schedules competing across 3 disciplines as well as Triathlon. Should a clash of dates arise a timely conversation with the Regional Academy Lead should occur to discuss clashes and options available to the athlete. Reasonable pre-agreed absence for relevant/required competition/commitments is obviously allowed. Part of Academy membership requires athletes to begin to identify and specialise as Triathletes and so with this prioritise Triathlon over other commitments.

Athletes will be expected to focus their triathlon racing commitments on the British Triathlon Youth and Junior Super Series, details of which can be found [here](#). For an idea of what a racing programme should look like for Academy age athletes please see the [Competition Map](#).

All Regional Academy athletes (including Affiliates or Development Squad) will also be expected to attend the Annual Performance Assessments.



5. Application and Selection for the Regional Academy

Regional Academy Trials take place annually in September/October - this is a three-stage process. All athletes whether new or returning are required to go through this process. For younger athletes results in the Regional Series and/or IRC's are no guarantee of entry to the Academy.

i. Application

Applications are open to all athletes in Region aged between 13 and 18. Athlete age for Academy Trials is taken as age on 1st September. Applications will require athletes to evidence swimming and running standards over the following distances:

Ages 13 -15: 200m swim/1500m run

Ages 16-18: 400m swim/3000m run

Unless under exceptional circumstances performances will need to be verified on the **British Swimming** or **UK Athletics** databases

British Triathlon uses a swim/run points table to indicate an athletes age and stage potential at this level of the Pathway. Levels will vary from region to region according to numbers and current Academy standards but a general minimum standard for invitation would be around 300 points. Athletes meeting or exceeding the minimum required levels will be invited to attend stage 2.

The points table can be found [here](#). Scores are calculated from the combined total of the corresponding points awarded for personal best times in each discipline.

Aligned to Whole Athlete Development and the ADF athletes will be expected to have a basic understanding of the Framework and will be asked to assess their weakest and strongest pillars as part of their application. Information on the ADF can be found [here](#).

Swimming, running and the requisite performance behaviours play a big part in Academy selections. In most regions cycling ability is also assessed in Stage 3. Athletes who do not have any cycling or triathlon experience will be unlikely to be selected into the Academy, instead they will be expected to develop this prior to their selection.



ii. Academy Time Trials

Academy Time Trials are held over the relevant age appropriate distances

Ages 13-15: 200m swim/1500m run

Ages 16-18: 400m swim/3000m run

Academy Time Trials in line with the ADF are a One Day One Race opportunity. Athletes are given the opportunity to stand up and deliver their best performance on that given day. The day will give the Academy coaching team the chance to observe athletes not only delivering their best but also the various processes that support this. The Regional Lead will also give a short talk/presentation outlining the expectations, culture within and operational model of the Academy and give athletes and parents the chance to ask questions they might have. Athletes successful in Stage 2 will be invited back to Stage 3.

iii. Stage 3 Assessment

Is a more detailed look at the athletes' abilities and behaviours across several elements relevant to the other 5 pillars of the ADF as well as their physical and technical capabilities. Behaviours include but are not limited to: commitment, passion, engagement, fascination, can do attitude, a willingness to accept and enjoy challenge & adversity and to work hard. Physical abilities may include, but not be limited to, aerobic and technical ability and physical technical robustness. The length of stage 3 varies from region to region and can be anything from one day to six months. Whatever the length of this period assessment will be continuous. This gives the coaches a broader and deeper understanding of each athlete allowing more objective selection decisions to be made.



Selection

At each stage of the application process athletes will receive feedback on their progress. Athletes who are unsuccessful will be given some follow up advice to support a future successful application.

Academies are normally split into 2 categories:

1. Affiliates or Development Squad
(Region dependent)
2. Full Academy members

Final selection to either Academy, Affiliate or Development Squad is region specific.

Academies vary across regions according to numbers, set up and current standards. Normally, Affiliates or Development Squad members will be expected to score around 320 points as a minimum standard for entry as well as reflect the development and associated professional behaviours aligned to the ADF. Full Academy members normally will need to score in the region of 340 points along with evidencing the supporting behaviours and development in line with the ADF.



6. The Inter Regional Championship (IRC)

The Inter-Regional Championship takes place annually as part of the British Triathlon Under 20's Festival and is a competition which brings together teams from each English region along with Wales, Scotland and Jersey. There

are 12 athletes in total which includes 3 athletes from Tristar 2 and Tristar 3 age categories for both males and females.

Whilst Academy athletes will race at the Under 20's Festival in the Youth and Junior races and in exceptional circumstances the IRC's themselves (final year TS3) the IRC team is not related to the Academy. However, many IRC athletes may aspire to become Academy athletes. Good performance

in the IRC race should not be taken as an indication that you may achieve the standard required for Academy selection. Academy selection is not based upon performance at the IRC's instead swimming and running times along with the pre-requisite performance behaviours and the broader physical abilities and skills that make up stage 3 are vital to Academy selection and subsequent success.



7. Considerations for longer term success and selection into the Regional Academy

Whole Athlete Development

Triathlon is massively physical and athletes will have to do a lot of training to be successful. Developing a love of the sport is huge. Training as Play is the first pillar for a reason, if athletes don't learn to love their training it is highly unlikely they will transition successfully to senior racing. Supporting and guiding your athlete in loving what they do is critical.

However, it isn't all about swim/bike and run either. Independent learning, problem solving and decision making are hugely important for longer term success. In line with the ADF athletes should be supported to explore all the pillars and within each to start to take guided ownership of their learning journey. At all points efforts should be made to actively expose athletes and let them explore the decision-making process that will support their whole development.

Swimming

Is where most Triathletes start and whilst some do, most Triathlon clubs do not offer the requisite number of weekly swimming sessions so joining a swimming club and progressing to a swimming squad is often vital. On average Academy members will swim between 6 and 10 hours a week depending on their squad, age, level and other commitments. We advise athletes to be competent in all four strokes. This not only develops more skillful swimmers in the longer term but also helps gain entry to most swim squads who will often assess competency using an individual medley (IM). Being a swim club member gives access to 'open meets' as well as County, Area and National Championships. Times from all such events will be recorded on the British Swimming database and so can be used to evidence your swim ability for Academy applications.



Running

If you aren't already start running events on the track, preferably with a running club and compete in 800/1500/3000m/5000m and Park Runs on a relatively regular basis. Depending on your age, your 1500 or 3000m track time should be of prime importance. All official club and open athletics meetings will have times logged on UK Athletics [Power of 10 website](#).

Cross Country running is very much encouraged and whilst not counting to Academy or England Talent Squad selections results in County, Regional and National competitions are looked at. Given the required strength and aerobic robustness elements there is a strong functional cross over from Cross Country running to off the bike Triathlon running.

Running given the impact through the body and in particular feet and lower legs, should be introduced slowly and with coached support.

Cycling

Group riding skills and the ability to ride 'on the wheel' or in close proximity to others on a bike is important in Elite Triathlon. Joining a local cycling group/club or cycling with the local triathlon club is beneficial for cycling and triathlon related skills. In general, just 'riding a bike' will help to develop cycling skills and fitness, whether road, mountain bike or cyclo-cross. However, athletes are encouraged to do as much group riding as possible. Bike races are frequent across all areas of the country and athletes who have mastered group riding skills are encouraged to race in any of endurance cycling disciplines - cyclo-cross (winter) or road/mountain bike (summer). Group riding skills are essential as all "Super Series" Youth and Junior races are draft legal.

Strength and Conditioning

To underpin the sports three disciplines a good regular strength and conditioning programme will help build a robust athlete, prevent injury and better support/enable continued development in the longer term. A routine should form part of a regular weekly training programme and become equally as important as training in the other three disciplines.

British Triathlon has a guide available that can be used to form the basis of a regular routine, which allows flexibility to add specific exercises if required to underpin any weaknesses or identified needs. This can be found [here](#). Whilst these exercises are a great guide we would advise any athlete undertaking an S+C programme to seek advice from a qualified coach.



Training Balance Across Disciplines

This is very difficult to give general advice on as all athletes have different strengths and weaknesses.

There are some common principles here though.

- For younger athletes (11-12), joining a swim club should take priority over joining a running club. Running can be developed from 13/14 years of age onwards relatively quickly especially when an athlete has the strong aerobic background that swimming gives
- If as a parent you are rightly concerned about too much activity each week, focus on swimming and keep the running/cycling 'ticking over' when younger (e.g. 1 session per week)
- Cycling has less impact on the body in terms of weight bearing and so can be introduced more quickly than running but again for the vast majority of younger athletes should not detract from swimming being the main focus up to the ages of at least 15/16
- Involve the athlete in the decision making process (Informed Choice) to help to build their understanding of what they are doing in training (Intelligent Training) and guide them in taking small steps to build towards them taking some ownership of their overall programme (Learning to Lead)
- A coach who knows the athlete and their strengths/weaknesses is invaluable in supporting this process



8. Competition, Equipment and Selection Policies

Super Series

The **British Youth and Junior Super Series** is designed to give athletes the chance to race at a high (national) level on multiple occasions. It provides excellent opportunities and it is a key part of a suite of experiences we feel are necessary to support athlete development through the Academy years. Where possible races are spread out across the country and evenly through the season. Course design and venues are also looked at to support athletes in experiencing a broad range of racing styles and types e.g.

- Format - single race, heats and finals, mixed team relay, triathlon, duathlon
- Swim - beach, pontoon, deep water start, salt water, fresh water
- Bike/Run - flat, rolling and hilly bike and run courses

Performance Assessments

Are an annual event across each Home Nation - they normally happen in April. Their main purpose is to provide all athletes across the country, whether a member of an Academy or not a fair chance to qualify for entry to the Super Series. Results of the Performance Assessment create a 'roll down' list that is used as the order of entry for all Super Series events. Start places will roll down the list in order of finish at the Assessments until the particular event is full. The weekend also provides both athletes and parents workshops and presentations from World Class and Home Nation Programme staff and athletes designed to better aid and support whole athlete development. All athletes are expected to attend to trial for places, those with illness/injury or exceptional extenuating circumstances will need to contact **Sophie Lewis** at sophielewis@britishtriathlon.org. More information can be found [here](#).



Gear Restrictions

Athletes at Youth age race on restricted gears in all drafting events. Those in Tristar 2 and 3 are also restricted in the majority of the drafting events they race too.

Gear restrictions are in place for a number of reasons:

- **Improved pedalling technique** - the higher cadences require athletes to improve this
- **Development of Race-craft** - groups form more easily when athletes are restricted, this supports the development of better race craft, decision making and tactical awareness/understanding
- **Impact of Physical Development** - without restrictions more physically developed athletes can rely on riding bigger gears to beat less developed athletes. Reliance on power doesn't work at senior level; race-craft, guile and decision making does
- **Energy Expenditure** - racing in a bunch is stochastic. Riding at a higher cadence allows athletes to manage these pace changes more smoothly with less energy cost. Restricting gears helps develop a higher cadence
- **Competitive Advantage** - A high number of senior athletes (male and female) in drafting triathlon do not pedal well. Exploiting this has performance impact for our athletes internationally
- **Athlete Development** - Whichever path an athlete follows; drafting, non-drafting or life-long participation, the opportunity to develop efficient pedalling technique will be of benefit
- **Athlete Education** - Learning to restrict gears means athletes will have to develop a keener understanding of how their bike works mechanically
- **Reduced Injury Risk** - A lot of young athletes ride bikes set up for adults that are inappropriate for their stage of physical development. Riding age appropriate gears lowers the force production needed through each pedal stroke and reduces injury risk

More information on gear restrictions and wheel regulations can be found on our website [here](#).



Equipment and Kit

Competing across three sports at a National level is an expensive business. Whilst there is an expectation that athletes have the right kit to compete safely and properly we do not expect nor encourage athletes to have the most expensive and latest pieces of equipment. In most cycling and triathlon clubs there tends to be a good second market and we would certainly encourage this especially with growing athletes. A longer term focus on athlete development in line with the ADF is always our preference rather than focussing on marginal equipment gains that might help in the short term.

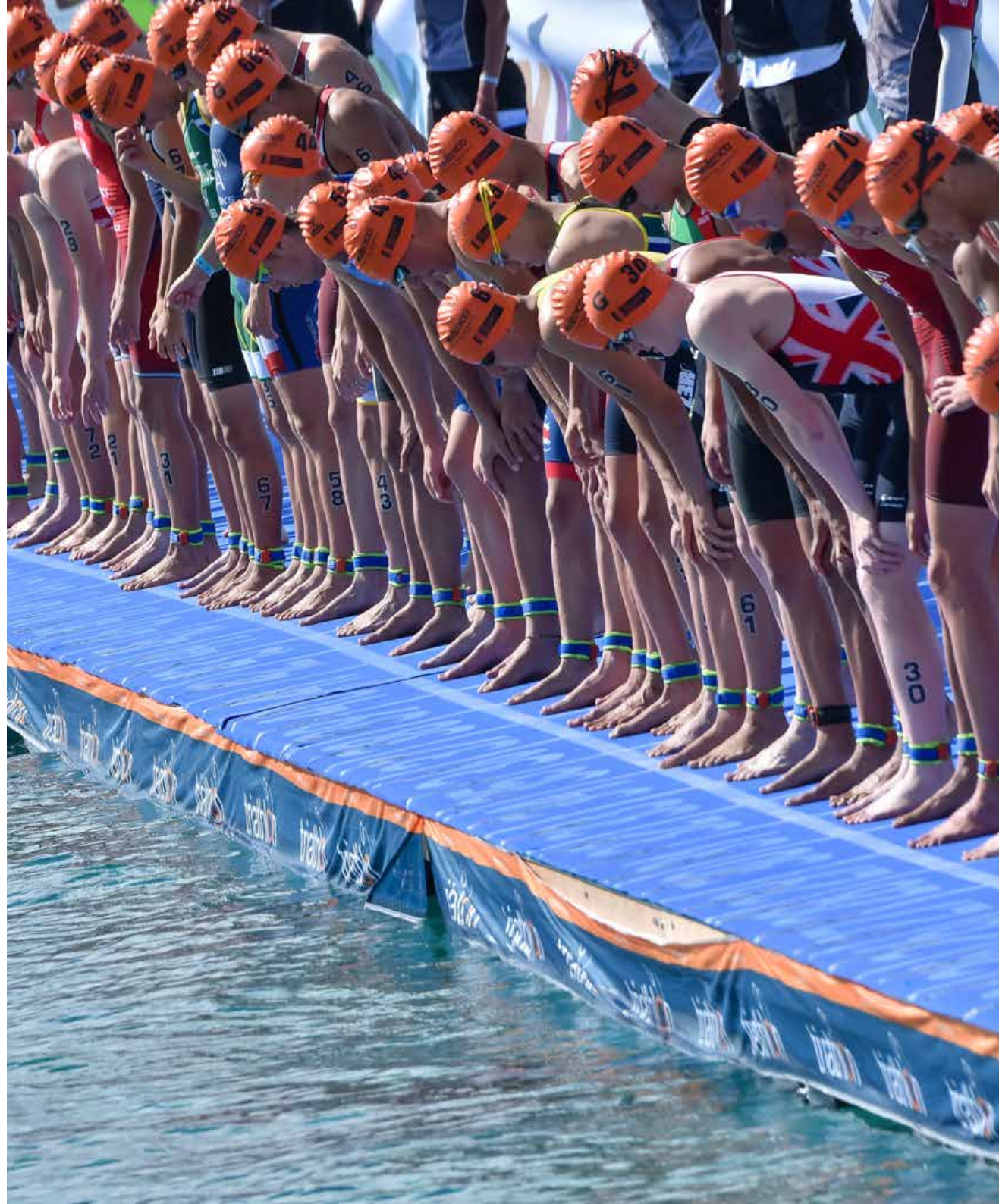
Whilst athletes are required to race in ITU regulation race-suits internationally e.g. country code/athlete name on the suit/no front zip; there is no expectation to do this at Super Series level. Most Academies will have athletes racing internationally and so Academy race-suits will normally be designed to meet ITU regulations.

International Racing

International racing can play an important part in the development journey of future world leading athletes.

There are 2 main opportunities for younger athletes here:

- Junior and Youth European and World Championships
- European Triathlon Union (ETU) Junior Cups



Junior and Youth European and World Championships

These events provided some of our current World leading athletes with their first taste of International racing. Whilst they provide some great experiences, and for many Youths and Juniors are a key focus, it must be remembered that it is still possible to become a leading senior athlete without being selected to race at this level at this age. Please note European and British age groups do not align.

Athletes are eligible for selection at the following ages:

- Youth 15/16/17 at the end of the year of competition
 - Junior 16*/17/18/19 at the end of the year of competition
- * Whilst 16 year olds are eligible to race over sprint distance in Europe it is very unusual for us to select athletes this young to race at this level as they compete over Super Sprint distances in the UK, and do not normally have the physical maturity or conditioning to compete with the world's best over the longer sprint distance

British Triathlon supports teams in the following events:

- Youth - European Youth Championships
- Junior - European & World Championships in Triathlon and Duathlon

Selection policies for these events can be found [here](#).

ETU Junior Cups

These essentially are a stepping stone between Super Series and International Championship events. Junior Cups are spread throughout the season and all over Europe. They provide excellent experiential development opportunities for athletes of an appropriate standard. The Junior Gateway events in May and at the end of the season (August/September) are the entry point into ETU Cups. The selection policy can be found [here](#).



ETU Health Check

All Junior/Youth athletes competing internationally in ITU/ETU events are required to complete a pre-participation evaluation (PPE) screening. Failure to do so will result in you not being able to be selected and entered. Such evaluations are being introduced across sports to better identify athletes at risk from electrical or structural heart abnormalities that may have serious repercussions in training and racing. Details of how to complete this screening can be found [here](#).

Athletes who have completed CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) screening will fulfil a large part of the required criteria. CRY screening is offered bi-annually at the Performance Assessments weekend. Results from the screening last for 2 years at which point a re-test is required.





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