

## **A SWIMMING GALA THROUGH THE EYES OF AN A.O.E. OPERATOR**

by Ralph Payne

This is my story of the events leading up to and after a district swimming event. However every gala is the same.

There is only pool in the East District at the moment that has its own equipment: it is my understanding this is unique to our district, so when an event is held at any other pool the following applies.

On the Friday before the event, finish work (my day job) about 5 – 6 pm. I now have to prepare my car and load all the equipment, which I store, go home, have tea, leave home and travel to Glenrothes Pool arriving around 8 pm. There is a pool disco every Friday night so can only take all the equipment down to the start end of the pool and unpack

At 9 pm I can get started properly, all the cables, red lane blocks buttons etc have to be laid out and positioned at each starting platform, cables run for the speakers and the additional light. All the touch pads have to be put in and secured. The table with the laptop battery etc has to be set up and the scoreboard connected, then it's all tested. Hopefully all is well and I can shut down and home anytime between 10.30 and 11 pm., have a shower and try to relax. It's 11.30 pm by this time – bed time zzzzzzzz.

Up at 6.45am and leave for the pool about 7.30am arriving at 8am – usually first at the pool. Crank up all the laptops etc and carry out another test. It is not the first time it has been OK the night before and the gremlins have been at work during the night. The Gala goes well, finishes about 5.15 pm. If there are any problems during the day, they are repaired during our lunch break. Everything gets shut down, go home and have tea. It's about 7 pm by the time I sit down.

Sunday morning, same routine through the day, we do of course fix anything that goes faulty, which is a rare occasion. At the end of the gala it's time to dismantle. If there are a couple of people who stay for a few minutes to help, that is appreciated. It is all packed away in bags and boxes, load the car (it is an estate car) otherwise it would not be possible to transport the equipment in one car. There is a problem with 3 touch pads which need repaired. The dilemma is do I stay and fix them now or return during the week? As I have to travel to St Andrews to facilitate a timekeepers course on Thursday my decision is made – I will stay and fix them – otherwise that will be another night I will be out. The pool is now eerily quiet, only the pool staff are cleaning up.

Pads fixed and now leaving the pool at 6.45 pm arrive at my workshop where the AOE is stored about 7.25 pm unload the car, unpack the equipment –AGAIN- and lay out all the cables, put everything on charge that needs to be charged, bag up the wet towels for washing, leave the workshop and arrive home at approximately 8.10 pm to see my wife (I think it is my wife)!

Next day (Monday) inspect the equipment for damage and test the buttons etc. If everything is dry, I can pack it away neatly or if not dry it has to be left out till next day. This takes approximately 2 hours. It is Tuesday before the equipment is ready for packing and the next trip which is this coming weekend – so it all starts again on the Friday for another 2 day gala. At that gala a timing pad had to be transported for a welding repair on the Saturday – this took until 9 pm, I took it back on the Sunday.

So next time you go on poolside, spare a thought for the people who put in a lot of time and effort before, during and after the events.

Why do we do it – there is no money other than expenses? We aim to provide an electronic timing service producing times which can be used for entry to National and British events. You can't buy this service other than from Omega itself at approximately £1000 per day.

My hope is by writing this, swimmers and parents might be appreciative of the work put in on their behalf.

Ralph Payne  
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