

Background

The 2021-2025 Water Polo Development Plan outlines a clear target to develop a National Squad programme across all ages, and to enable National Teams to compete at international competitions.

Better player management, commitment and development through focused and varied training schedules producing a fitter and better skilled National Squad

It is recognised that:

- All National Squad members will display full commitment to a comprehensive training programme both through their club and the National Squad programme
- Players will be required to complete regular online training submissions
- The National Squad programme supports players for a minimum two-year period
- Players defined as 'Male' or 'Female' throughout this Policy relates to the player's biological sex assigned to them at birth

Player Eligibility

At the time of selection, players must meet all the following criteria to be considered to be eligible for selection:

- i. Be an Irish citizen and hold a valid Irish passport;
- i. Be eligible to represent Ireland as per [World Aquatics Competition Regulations](#) on Sport Nationality;
- ii. Be a registered Swim Ireland member for the in the current season;
- iii. Be in good standing with Swim Ireland;
- iv. Be available to fulfil all the National Squad programme obligations;
- v. Comply with the expectations of the National Coaching Panel;
- vi. Not be the subject of a current anti-doping ban, a doping violation and/or a pending doping violation
- vii. Have not acted in such a manner so as to bring himself/herself, Swim Ireland and/or the sport into current disrepute.

Programme 2023-2025

Swim Ireland Water Polo will operate a four-tiered National Squad programme encompassing a Senior Squad, an U19 Squad, an U17 Squad, and an U15 Squad (ages as at 31st December 2025) with the Programme aiming to support players as they endeavour to reach their full potential at senior international level. **Age groups are based on European Aquatics and World Aquatics regulations and are subject to change based on European and World Calendars.**

Players will be selected at a young age and their performance will be monitored. All age groups will continue to progress so new players will be added.

Clubs need to implement National Standards into their sessions to help players reach the levels to be invited to the National Squad Programme.

Players within the designated age brackets will be selected by their position within the game, and the performance of the National Standards, not their age.

Expected Player Attributes

- Exemplary training attendance and commitment in the home programme
- Regional and/or National competition attendance
- Positive engagement with staff
- Attitude, positivity, and performance behaviours displayed on National Teams and previous National/Regional Squad Programme periods
- Resilience and a first-class work ethic
- An openness to learning
- Personal accountability

National Coaching Panel

The Water Polo National Coach along with the Head Coaches for the different cohorts will oversee the implementation of the National Programme.

Goran Sablic (National Coach)

- General Oversight

Goran Sablic (National Coach) Senior Men's Squad	Gary O'Brien (Head Coach) Senior Women's Squad
Padraig Smyth (Head Coach) U19 Men's Squad	Stevie Nolan (Head Coach) U19 Women's Squad
Eoin Bridgeman (Head Coach) U17 Boy's Squad	Ciaran O'Driscoll (Head Coach) U17 Girl's Squad
Brian Morrissey (Head Coach) U15 Boy's Squad	Jane Reilly (Head Coach) U15 Girl's Squad

Staff Structure

Each Squad will also have up to two assistant coaches and a Team Manager working with them for the duration of the programme:

Senior Men Team Manager – Eamon Caulfield	Senior Women Assistant Coach – Ruth McGuigan Team Manager – Sharlene Urry
U19 Men Assistant Coach – Barry Magill Assistant Coach – Joe Cosgrove Team Manager – Orna Kiernan	U19 Women Assistant Coach – Lynn Hanna Short Assistant Coach – Mick Kelly Team Manager – Anne Crosbie
U17 Boys Assistant Coach – Cillian Colvin Team Manager – Oonagh Garry	U17 Girls Assistant Coach – Sharlene Urry Team Manager – Aveen Colvin
U15 Boys Assistant Coach – Damien O'Neill Team Manager – Siobhan Egan	U15 Girls Assistant Coach – Mariusz Smialek Team Manager – Siobhan O'Driscoll

All coaching teams will be familiar with the National Squad Programme, and they will have to comply with the process and calendar schedule.

A coaching team will submit a travelling team list to the Head Coach who will keep the right to make changes that will be discussed with the coaching team.

Senior Squad (Men & Women)

- Age Groups:** All Ages
- Player Responsibility:** Senior Squad Coaching Teams
- Player Quota:** 18-21

Squad Information:

- There will be a minimum criteria for each player
- Players will get their position within the Squad
- A Travelling Team will have 13 players (2 goalies)
- Adding in and out players can happen throughout the season
- Same coaching team will stay with the Squad for two years
- Coaches will monitor players during the cup and league competitions through this 2-year period. Any observed weaknesses and strengths will be marked in the players Logbook. The coaching team might not stay with the team after the 2-year period ends. This will be discussed with the National Head Coach
- Trials won't be held for this age group

Squad Activity:

Please note that the aim of the National Squad Programme is to introduce a Strength & Conditioning and a Nutrition Programme in the coming seasons, but this is dependent on the annual Ireland Water Polo budget.

ACTIVITY	DETAILS	NOTES
Strength and Conditioning Introduction	Intro to S&C. 8-week program given. Tracked via app which is monitored by S&C coach	Injury prevention + gym Recap every 8 weeks and new program outlined. Tracked on app
Nutrition	Introduction + tracking	Introducing & tracking players logbook of healthy eating habits
Pool Sessions	Testing	Testing KPIs that cover anaerobic, aerobic, leg strength and leg agility in the pool
		Plan is to test this twice a year and in between test, program additional swimming and legwork to improve scores
		Programmed via app, similar to S&C
	Drills + Internal Games	Focus on position specific skills
	Tournaments	Ass per calendar

Player Obligations:

- Player full compliance with logbook completion
- Player full attendance at all calendared events
 - Considerations will be made in relation to key academic/examination periods. Players wishing to be excused on these grounds should inform the coaching team no less than four weeks in advance of the event they need to miss.
 - Players who are ill/injured leading up to an event should inform the coaching team. The team will then decide if the athlete should attend or not. Non-attendance may require presentation of a doctor/physio certificate
- Players accepting their place on the National Squad Programme should not take extended (4 days or more) holidays in the periods 01/11/23 to 24/12/23 and extended (8 days or more) 01/01/24 to the identified and agreed summer benchmark/s meet in 2024. Players planning to take extended holidays during these periods should decline an invitation to join the National Squad Programme. Players found to be taking extended holidays during the season without advising their coaching team will be removed from the National Squad Programme and put their position on the Programme in the following season in jeopardy.

U19 Squad (Men & Women)

Age Groups: For 2023/2024 – 2005,2006,2007; For 2024/2025 – 2006,2007

Player Responsibility: U19 Squad Coaching Teams

Player Quota: 18-21

Squad Information:

- There is a need to build a bridge between the U17 National Squad and the Senior National Squad. After the U17 European Championships, that Squad will form the basis of this squad.
- Other players can be nominated by their coach to the National Coaching Panel – these players will be subject to assessment and testing before an addition is made. The National Head Coach has final say on whether a player will be added to the squad or not
- Up to 4 goalkeepers will be included in the Squad
- Players from this squad may be invited to join the Senior National Squad at any stage during the Programme
- There will be a minimum criteria for each player – this will include minimum pool sessions, S&C, and testing
- Players will get their position within the Squad
- A Travelling Team will have 13 players (2 goalies) – on occasion, the Travelling Team *may* be increased to 15
- Adding in and out players can happen throughout the season
- Same coaching team will stay with the Squad for two years
- The trials won't be held for this age group

Squad Activity:

Please note that the aim of the National Squad Programme is to introduce a Strength & Conditioning and a Nutrition Programme in the coming seasons, but this is dependent on the annual Ireland Water Polo budget.

ACTIVITY	DETAILS	NOTES
Strength and Conditioning Introduction	Intro to S&C. 8-week program given. Tracked via app which is monitored by S&C coach	Injury prevention + gym Recap every 8 weeks and new program outlined. Tracked on app
Nutrition	Introduction + tracking	Introducing & tracking players logbook of healthy eating habits
Pool Sessions	Testing	Testing KPIs that cover anaerobic, aerobic, leg strength and leg agility in the pool
		Plan is to test this twice a year and in between test, program additional swimming and legwork to improve scores
		Programmed via app, similar to S&C
	Drills + Internal Games	Focus on position specific skills
	Tournaments	Ass per calendar

Player Obligations:

- Player full compliance with logbook completion – including pool sessions, S&C, and testing
- Player full attendance at all calendared events
 - Considerations will be made in relation to key academic/examination periods. Players wishing to be excused on these grounds should inform the coaching team no less than four weeks in advance of the event they need to miss.
 - Players who are ill/injured leading up to an event should inform the coaching team. The team will then decide if the athlete should attend or not. Non-attendance may require presentation of a doctor/physio certificate
- Players must play in the same position with their club that they are playing with the National Squad
- Players accepting their place on the National Squad Programme should not take extended (4 days or more) holidays in the periods 01/11/23 to 24/12/23 and extended (8 days or more) 01/01/24 to the identified and agreed summer benchmark/s meet in 2024. Players planning to take extended holidays during these periods should decline an invitation to join the National Squad Programme. Players found to be taking extended holidays during the season without advising their coaching team will be removed from the National Squad Programme and put their position on the Programme in the following season in jeopardy

U17 Squad (Men & Women)

Age Groups:	2008 or younger
Player Responsibility:	U17 Squad Coaching Teams
Player Quota:	18-21

Squad Information:

- After the U15 European Championships, that Squad will form the basis of this squad.
- Other players can be nominated by their coach to the National Coaching Panel – these players will be subject to assessment and testing before an addition is made. The National Head Coach has final say on whether a player will be added to the squad or not
- Up to 4 goalkeepers will be included in the Squad
- There will be a minimum criteria for each player – this will include minimum pool sessions, S&C, and testing
- Players will get their position within the Squad
- A Travelling Team will have 13 players (2 goalies) – on occasion, the Travelling Team *may* be increased to 15
- Adding in and out players can happen throughout the season
- Same coaching team will stay with the Squad for two years
- Coaches will monitor players during the cup and league competitions through this 2-year period. Any observed weaknesses and strengths will be marked in the players Logbook. The coaching team might not stay with the team after the 2-year period ends. This will be discussed with the National Head Coach
- The trials won't be held for this age group

Squad Activity:

Please note that the aim of the National Squad Programme is to introduce a Strength & Conditioning and a Nutrition Programme in the coming seasons, but this is dependent on the annual Ireland Water Polo budget.

ACTIVITY	DETAILS	NOTES
Strength and Conditioning Introduction	Intro to S&C. 8-week program given. Tracked via app which is monitored by S&C coach	Majority of S&C at this stage will be prehab exercises and injury prevention but access to gyms might be an issue
		Can be adapted to only use bands and bodyweight exercises
		Recap every 8 weeks and new program outlined. Tracked on app
Nutrition	Introduction + tracking	Introducing & tracking players logbook of healthy eating habits
Pool Sessions	Testing	Testing KPIs that cover anaerobic, aerobic, leg strength and leg agility in the pool
		Plan is to test this twice a year and in between test, program additional swimming and legwork to improve scores
	Drills + Internal Games	Programmed via app, similar to S&C
	MNLD 2	Focus on position specific skills
	Tournaments	The Squad (Boys Only) will enter Div2 aiming to finish the league before the qualification tournament
		Ass per calendar

Player Obligations:

- Player full compliance with logbook completion – including pool sessions, S&C, and testing
- Player full attendance at all calendared events
 - Considerations will be made in relation to key academic/examination periods. Players wishing to be excused on these grounds should inform the coaching team no less than four weeks in advance of the event they need to miss.
 - Players who are ill/injured leading up to an event should inform the coaching team. The team will then decide if the athlete should attend or not. Non-attendance may require presentation of a doctor/physio certificate
- Players must play in the same position with their club that they are playing with the National Squad
- Players accepting their place on the National Squad Programme should not take extended (4 days or more) holidays in the periods 01/11/23 to 24/12/23 and extended (8 days or more) 01/01/24 to the identified and agreed summer benchmark/s meet in 2024. Players planning to take extended holidays during these periods should decline an invitation to join the National Squad Programme. Players found to be taking extended holidays during the season without advising their coaching team will be removed from the National Squad Programme and put their position on the Programme in the following season in jeopardy

U15 Squad (Men & Women)

Age Groups:	2010 or younger
Player Responsibility:	U17 Squad Coaching Teams
Player Quota:	18-21

Squad Information:

- The U13 National Cup will be the Trials for this squad.
- Players will be identified based on the National Standards – they need to have the ability to perform these elements correctly. Other players can be nominated by their coach to the National Coaching Panel – these players will be subject to assessment and testing before an addition is made. The National Head Coach has final say on whether a player will be added to the squad or not
- Up to 4 goalkeepers will be included in the Squad
- There will be a minimum criteria for each player – this will include minimum pool sessions, S&C, and testing
- Players will get their position within the Squad
- A Travelling Team will have 13 players (2 goalies) – on occasion, the Travelling Team *may* be increased to 15
- Adding in and out players can happen throughout the season
- Same coaching team will stay with the Squad for two years
- Coaches will monitor players during the cup and league competitions through this 2-year period. Any observed weaknesses and strengths will be marked in the players Logbook. The coaching team might not stay with the team after the 2-year period ends. This will be discussed with the National Head Coach

- Each player will get a position in the game. That position will not be fixed for this age group, but it will give a player an opportunity to specialise skills for that position. Ideally players should not change positions once they have them. Some players might get two positions but that will be discussed by the National Coaching Panel. Player's position will be marked in their Logbook and players club must be notified about players position within the national squad
- The trials won't be held for this age group

Squad Activity:

Please note that the aim of the National Squad Programme is to introduce a Strength & Conditioning and a Nutrition Programme in the coming seasons, but this is dependent on the annual Ireland Water Polo budget.

ACTIVITY	DETAILS	NOTES
Strength and Conditioning Introduction	Intro to S&C. 8-week program given. Tracked via app which is monitored by S&C coach	Majority of S&C at this stage will be prehab exercises and injury prevention
		Can be adapted to only use bands and bodyweight exercises
		Recap every 8 weeks and new program outlined. Tracked on app
Nutrition	Introduction + tracking	Introducing & tracking players logbook of healthy eating habits
Pool Sessions	Testing	Testing KPIs that cover anaerobic, aerobic, leg strength and leg agility in the pool
		Plan is to test this twice a year and in between test, program additional swimming and legwork to improve scores
		Programmed via app, similar to S&C
	Drills + Internal Games	Focus on position specific skills
	Tournaments	Ass per calendar

Player Obligations:

- Player full compliance with logbook completion – including pool sessions, S&C, and testing
- Player full attendance at all calendared events
 - Considerations will be made in relation to key academic/examination periods. Players wishing to be excused on these grounds should inform the coaching team no less than four weeks in advance of the event they need to miss.
 - Players who are ill/injured leading up to an event should inform the coaching team. The team will then decide if the athlete should attend or not. Non-attendance may require presentation of a doctor/physio certificate
- Players must ensure their club are aware of the position they have been asked to play with the National Squad and play in the same position with their club
- Players accepting their place on the National Squad Programme should not take extended (4 days or more) holidays in the periods 01/11/23 to 24/12/23 and extended (8 days or more) 01/01/24 to the identified and agreed summer benchmark/s meet in 2024. Players planning to take extended holidays during these periods should decline an invitation to join the National Squad Programme. Players found to be taking extended holidays during the season without advising their coaching team will be removed from the National Squad Programme and put their position on the Programme in the following season in jeopardy