**AZTEC JERSEY TRIATHLON ACADEMY**

***BACKGROUND***

The Aztec Jersey Triathlon Academy (AJTA) is one of 11 Academies (excluding Scotland and Wales) recognised by the British Triathlon Federation (BTF) as part of the first stage of the British Triathlon World Class Performance Pathway. It is worth noting that whilst the AJTA is recognised, it does not benefit from any direct funding from BTF. This is because BTF and its academies are funded by Sport England and in order to benefit from funding from Sport England, an athlete must reside at a UK postcode.

Whilst the final stages, the Olympic Podium and Olympic Academy squads, are GB managed, the first two stages - the Regional and Home Nations Academies - are under the remit of England, Scotland and Wales and by extension to the Crown Dependent Islands like the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Each Academy has a Regional Head Coach and for AJTA that is currently Nick Saunders – *Nick@tpscoach.com*

The purpose of the AJTA system is to identify and develop athletes from 14 year old, second year Tristar 3, through to Junior level in order that the Junior athletes can be considered for application to the England Talent Squad (ETS) or the equivalent Home Nations squad. It is taken “as a given” that all AJTA athletes will have an ambition to compete for Jersey at the Island Games and Commonwealth Games.

Nationally there are approximately 200 athletes within the Regional Academy set up; from these athletes approximately the 10 best athletes will be invited into the England A squad and the next six to 10 athletes may be invited onto the England B Squad. From the England A squad it is hoped that athletes will progress onto the GBR World Class Potential/ Podium Squads. Statistically 1 athlete out of 200 (0.5%) will follow the traditional talent pathway through to the end.

The Regional Academies are for Youth and Junior athletes (and in certain cases Tristar 3 athletes), and exclusively focussed on Olympic format triathlon - i.e. Draft-legal racing up to Olympic distance.

The nature of draft-legal triathlon, and the remit of the World Class Programme (to deliver Olympic medals) determine the type of young performer that the BTF seeks to recruit into its academies, and therefore the selection process and standards.

Whilst the ultimate aim for AJTA is defined by the BTF World Class Programme, in parallel, the AJTA focuses on producing capable athletes for, firstly to compete at a high level at the Youth and Junior British Super Series, secondly the Island Games and ultimately, the Commonwealth Games.

***HOW TO DEVELOP A GREAT TRIATHLETE?***

To compete effectively in draft-legal triathlon, competitors must be able to swim well enough to make the first couple of cycle groups as they leave Transition 1. As the best competitors are excellent swimmers everyone must be an excellent swimmer. To be successful in draft-legal triathlon competitors must also be able to run well enough to beat the opposition head-to-head. As the best competitors are excellent runners anyone who hopes to be successful in triathlon must also be an excellent runner.

At the elite level, men swim approximately 17 minutes for 1500m in open water. That equates to about 4:15 for 400m in the pool. The top women are about a minute slower.

The top men then run approximately 30 minutes for 10km. The women approximately 33 minutes.

The very best juniors and youths are capable of similar speeds over shorter distances. Basic speed is essential, unfortunately enhanced fitness does not compensate for lack of basic speed.

Accordingly selection for World Class Programmes and by extension Academies, include speed trials for swimming and running.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on your point of view, there is much, much more to triathlon than basic swim and run speed. The Performance programme are interested in athletes who have the potential to become high performing senior triathletes in the future: this entails a significant commitment to training for, and competing at, triathlon over a substantial period of time. Triathletes, unlike swimmers, do not reach competitive maturity until at least their mid-twenties.

Cycling does not feature in these early trials. The rationale for this is due to swimming and, to a slightly lesser degree, running both being **early development** sports. They require a large amount of time (thousands of hours) to master and as a consequence are very difficult to master as an adult. This is because there is not time and/or natural movement has become stifled through the ageing process. Swimmers win Olympic medals in their teens. Runners mature later (few teenage Olympians) but the movement patterns for running fast have to be developed young. With age comes power and endurance.

In contrast cycling is a **late development** sport. It requires excellent cardio vascular fitness but is technically relatively simple. Many of the world’s best cyclists converted to cycling having developed their cardio-vascular fitness in other sports.

However, becoming a cyclist is an essential part of becoming a good triathlete, and though it is possible to make up the ground on those who cycled from a young age, it will still require serious commitment, a lot of hard work and cannot be done in isolation.

**AJTA *SELECTION CRITERIA***

***Trials***

The trials for entry to AJTA will be held on 10 September 2017 at FB Field (run) and Haute Valle School (swim). The trial will comprise a run trial followed by a swim trial. The distances are:

Youth and second year Tristar 3 athletes for the 2018 Season: 200m swim, 1500m run

Junior Athletes for the 2018 Season: 400m swim, 3000m run

The swim will be a dive start although a wall start is also permitted. There will be one swimmer per lane.

Athletes may wear spikes to run. Athletes will be set off at 20 second intervals to minimise the effect of pacing.

The trials are open to anyone eligible to represent Jersey.

In order to assess performance, a points system has been developed by the British Triathlon Federation

For the September 2017 trials ***athletes will need to demonstrate that they can score the minimum 285 points required*** to be considered for the AJTA.

If an athlete feels they are capable of scoring the minimum 285 points then they should apply to attend the trials.

*How the points scores calculates for athletes:*

To find out your current score, write down your personal best times for the required swimming and running distances. Reference the tables in the link below. There is a male (M) and female (F) column for both swim and run. Scroll down the two columns to find your swim and run bests then move across to the left ‘score column’ to find the corresponding score. Adding the 2 scores together produces the total.

The points table can be viewed here:

<https://www.britishtriathlon.org/regions/london/documents/academy/new-regional-academy-points-tables-2016---final_ed.pdf>

An explanation of the evolution of the points table is outlined in this document:

<https://www.britishtriathlon.org/regions/london/documents/academy/new-academy-points-tables-documentation.docx>

As an indication only, the minimum standard of 285 points would equate as follows (for a balanced athlete) for the indicated ages.

* 14yr old Boy: 200 swim time 2:37 with 1500m run time of 5:15.
14yr old Girl: 200m swim time 2:42 with 1500m run time of 5:46.

* 17yr old Boy: 400m swim time 5:18 with 3000m run time of 10:36
17yr old Girl: 400m swim time of 5:32 with 3000m run time of 11:46

To corroborate the athlete’s score they will need to have a swim time recorded on GBR Swimming at the following website:

*www.swimmingresults.org/individualbest*

As well as having a run time on GBR Athletics at the following website

*http://www.thepowerof10.info/athletes/athleteslookup.aspx .*

If an athlete has not got a current swim or run time on these sites the athlete or parent of the athlete must send an email to Nick Saunders – nick@tpscoach.com verifying that the athlete has achieved the times stated or achieved equivalent performance over a similar distance within the last season.

In addition to achieving the minimum points, a number of other factors will be used to select athletes, including: performance at the selection trials, 2017 race results, commitment, conduct and potential to add value to the current academy.

Existing members of the AJTA are expected to attend the selection trials, and will be assessed against the same criteria, as well as their adherence to the AJTA process during the 2017 season.

Please note that even if an athlete achieves the minimum points expectation, that achievement does not guarantee a place in AJTA. There are a maximum of 12 places available in AJTA FOR 2017/18 and therefore it is likely that the top 12 points scorers will be accepted into AJTA although as mentioned above there will be several factors taken into account when making the final selection.

At the Head Coach’s discretion, personal best performances achieved during 2017 may be considered if performances at the selection trials are below expectation.

After the trials, the following process will occur:

* If you have been successful in achieving the required points for entry into the AJTA you will be notified within 3 days, either by the coach meeting you in person or via telephone and you will be asked to confirm your acceptance of a place in the AJTA.
* If you been unsuccessful in achieving the required points for entry into the AJTA you will be notified by telephone within 3 days. During that call the Head Coach will arrange to meet with you within the following 2 weeks:
	+ Discuss your performance at the trials
	+ Provide you with constructive feedback
	+ Communicate the coaching support available to you within the Jersey Triathlon Club and its partners
	+ Discuss your racing ambitions for the forthcoming season

*Should you accept a place in the AJTA you will be expected to take up membership of the Jersey Triathlon Club and British Triathlon*

***AJTA EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS***

For those who accept a place in the AJTA the following will be required:

*AJTA Training Days & Camps.*

It is a requirement of being a member of the AJTA that you will attend all AJTA Training Days.

These are:

xx October 2017

xx November 2017

xx December 2017

xx January 2018

xx February 2018

xx March 2018

*Acceptable reasons to miss a training weekend will be:*

* Due to study/exam preparation;
* Competing at a qualification event for Jersey/Home Nations/GBR selection or racing for Jersey/Home Nations/ GBR.
* Illness
* At the discretion Regional Head Coach.

The training days are intended to add value to what the athletes are achieving in their home environment. The Head Coach will be able to spend time providing an individualised service to the athlete. Considering their specific technical, tactical, physiological & psychological needs as well as nutritional & recovery strategies.

***Minimum skills and delivery expectations***

In order to ensure that the AJTA athletes have a home training environment and to enable the coaching staff to focus on progression with the athletes it is recommended that within the various training sessions the AJTA athletes can show the following:

* Have the appropriate swim & run times.
* Ability to ride rollers.
* Be able to do a ‘flying mount’ on the bike.
* Be able to ride & dismount the bike safely.
* Have good movement literacy.
* Have functional strength.
* Race at local events against a good quality of field.
* Update all their training within 48 hours on the AJTA provided Training Peaks account (www. Trainingpeaks.com). It is hoped that all athletes in the AJTA will be provided with a Training Peaks online training diary where they can record their daily training activity as well as their wellness metrics, such as quality of sleep, general feeling, etc. The AJTA Head Coach will have sight on this account.
* Send their “What Went Well & Even Better If” comments through to the AJTA Head Coach within 48 hours of an event, including but not limited to Swimming Galas; Cross-Country Running; Biathle; Duathlon & Triathlon.
* Must be able to train regularly with a swimming club or squad (at least four times a week), ideally Tigers Swimming Club
* Must be able to cycle regularly (weekly) with cyclists (e.g. a cycling or triathlon club)
* Must be able to run weekly in a good quality running environment
* Must be able to commit to triathlon racing and AJTA training sessions
* Must be able to prioritise triathlon over the individual sports

***Training Volume Expectations***

**Youth Athletes (15/16years)**

***Training 12 – 19 hours per week***

***Swimming***

* 6-9 hours swim training
* Open water swimming
* Pack/drafting swim sessions

***Cycling***

* Riding 4-6 hours per week
* Longest ride 2-2.30 hrs
* Second longest ride 60-90 mins
* Able to ride rollers
* Able to do flying mount and pack ride

***Running***

* 2 -4 hours per week
* Longest run 40-60 mins
* 2nd longest run 30-45 mins
* Specific 3k/5k speed specific focused interval sessions
* Conditioned to run at high pace and intensity

*Please note that TS3 athletes will train at a reduced volume to the above but 6 – 9 hours of swimming will still be expected.*

**Junior Athletes (17-19)**

***Training 20 – 25 hours per week***

***Swimming***

* 6 hours swim training
* Open water swimming
* Pack/drafting swim sessions

***Cycling***

* Riding 8-14 hours per week
* Longest ride 3-4 hrs
* Second longest ride 2-3 hrs
* Specific TT focused sessions
* Specific chain-gang focused sessions

**Running**

* 4-7 hours per week
* Longest run 60-90 mins
* 2nd longest run 45-75 mins
* Specific 5k/8k speed specific focused interval sessions
* VO2 and tempo based sessions
* Conditioned to run at High pace and intensity

***Racing***

TS3 athletes will be expected to compete at the *Inter Regional Championships* (IRC’s) by qualifying through the appropriate qualifying races. The inter-regional championship takes place annually at different locations in the UK and is a competition which brings together teams from each 10 English Regions plus from Scotland and Wales. The IRC Manager selects up to 12 athletes in total which includes 3 athletes from T2 and T3 age categories for both males and females to represent Jersey at this event. The athletes are selected based on their performance at the qualifying race, usually, Supertri at Eton Dorney held late June/early July each year.

The AJTA coaching team is not involved in IRC selection or IRC team management. However the AJTA coaches will be monitoring the performance of TS3 AJTA athletes as well as potential AJTA athletes of the future.

Youth and Junior athletes are expected to race in the Youth and Junior British Super Series. The 2017 British Triathlon Youth & Junior Super Series is designed to bring together the best young triathletes from across the UK, so they can race head to head at the best and most exciting venues in the country. There are a total of six races in the series and an AJTA athlete will be expected to race in a minimum of four races. However, participation at events in this series will be dependent on performance at an assessment day combining a broken swim – bike/run test at least one month in advance of the first series race. The intention is to send a minimum of 2 athletes per category to these events. Those who do not qualify for these events will be guided by the Head Coach on which second tier events are available to them as racing opportunities.

Financial support for travelling to these races will be provided in accordance with the travel funding policy set by the Jersey Triathlon Club Junior Committee at the beginning of each year.

***Home Environment***

Athletes home environment recommendations.

* Assess whether your home training environment meets your needs as an AJTA athlete.
* Use a light box rather than alarm clock.
* 60 minutes before bed come off “blue light” devices such as laptop; ipad; phone.
* Bedroom temperature approx 16 - 18°C.
* Bedroom blacked out – no ambient light. Consider an eye mask.
* Ideally at least 7 ½ hours sleep per day; broken down into 90 minute cycles. Ideally you would achieve this is 5 x 90 minutes during the night but it could be managed as 4 x 90 minutes at night & a further 90 minute nap at some point during the day.
* If you have to take any medication, including vitamins, check them on http:// www.globaldro.com/Home & keep a screenshot each time you check.
* If you have to use any supplements such as energy drink or protein drinks, check them on http://www.informed-sport.com/ & keep a screenshot each time you check.

**The importance of engaging with Club coaches**

The AJTA cannot function without the support of our local Aztec Tristar coaches. The AJTA is part of and an extension of Aztec Jersey Tristars. To ensure that the AJTA is successful, all club coaches and members must be fully aware of its purpose and its objectives. Suitably qualified coaches are encouraged to play a part within the AJTA and support at training days and events is both encouraged and appreciated. If you are a coach and you’d like to know more or be involved, please contact the Head Coach.

**Managing expectations**

It is important that coaches, parents and athletes fully understand the role of the AJTA.

The main objective of the AJTA is to support high performance athletes and to provide them with the opportunity to learn lifelong skills within a challenging sporting environment. The AJTA is the first step on the performance pathway and it is to be expected that some athletes may be in the AJTA one year but not the next.

As this is the first step on the triathlon performance pathway there is an expectation of commitment from the athletes accepting their places within the AJTA. Triathlon has to be their main sport. It is appreciated that if the athlete is a talented triathlete, they are likely to be a talented swimmer, cyclist or runner and that school and club coaches will make their demands of the athlete. However our expectation is that if an athlete is taking up a slot within the AJTA their focus will be on being the best triathlete they can be.

It is anticipated that in 2018 we will have more athletes than places in the AJTA and there will be disappointment for some of our athletes so for those who are offered a place, full commitment is mandatory.

It is the athletes’ academy; they drive the standard forward and they set what are the acceptable behaviours, the Coaching Team will help the athletes move towards their goals and we will all do this with parental support.

***If you would like to attend the AJTA trials on 10 September 2017, please contact Fintan Kennedy for an application form at*** ***fintan@juniorjerseytri.com*** ***by 27 August 2017.***

In the meantime, if you have any questions please contact Nick Saunders or Fintan Kennedy.