



OCEANS INSIGHTS

Youth sport across the globe and in New Zealand has been undergoing significant change in recent years – the impact of COVID, the reduction in unstructured play and recreation and overall decrease in participation in sport and physical activity has required all sports to re-examine what and how they provide opportunities for their communities, particularly the youth. In 2022 Surf Life Saving New Zealand joined other National Sporting Organisations in supporting and working towards Sport NZ's '[Balance is Better](#)' principles and the promotion of '[Good Sports](#)'.

'Balance is Better' originated from the Sport NZ 2016-2020 Talent Plan, where the focus was to support sporting organisations to better understand how to prepare and support young athletes through their developmental phases and is now the approach that underpins all youth sport in NZ. The Balance is Better principles are an evidence-based methodology, encouraging long term athlete development that focuses on participation and skill development, appropriate to the developmental phases and needs of participants. A key driver to the Balance is Better principles is centred around why young people play sport, to; have fun, be part of a team, be challenged, to improve, grow friendships, play with friends and overall enjoyment.

We know kids participate in Surf Life Saving for lots of different reasons and we want Oceans to keep growing and getting better so our junior members, parents and volunteers want to keep coming back and continue to be a part of our awesome movement.

In recent years we have introduced a number of initiatives and changes, including:

Composite Teams

Composite teams are for competitors who, for one reason or another are unable to compete for their club e.g. insufficient numbers/genders to field a full team. This has successfully been introduced at a number of other carnivals to provide maximum opportunities for participation.

Read more about how composite teams work [here](#)

Run-Swim-Run with Fins

All age-groups have the option to use fins in the run-swim-run We believe this will provide added confidence and competence while acting as a start point for progressive skill development towards becoming a lifeguard in the future.

Oceans Finishers Medal

Putting a foot on the line at Oceans and finishing a race is an accomplishment in itself and SLSNZ believes that recognizing and rewarding this will provide a sense of pride, incentive for all participants and further encourage the development of lifesaving skills. In 2023, everyone that completed the run-swim-run received a unique medal. In 2024 it was the surf race and in 2025 it was the board race. In 2026 it will be the run-swim-run. The event will still progress from heats to a final with the usual medals for top three placegetters.

'Super Sunday'

Where possible, all events will progress from heats through to finals unless conditions dictate otherwise.

In previous years, heats and semi-finals for individual events were run from Thursday to Saturday, leaving all finals Sunday. History shows that we consistently lose time due to prevailing conditions which results in a mixture of extending time on the beach, removing events from the programme, reducing progression of competitors from heats or reducing entries into particular events, all in an effort to 'finish the carnival'. We also know that only a small percentage of participants make individual finals and are often in multiple finals, resulting in only a small group of participants being involved on Sunday as well as that small group having a very high volume of racing in a short period of time.

Top Club Trophy

Team points are not calculated and there is no trophy for overall Top Club.

Wetsuits

Juniors may wear wet suits in any event. More detailed information can be read [here](#)

Mixed Grand Cameron

There is no gender designation for the legs of the six-person Mixed Grand Cameron – the event is still 3 male/3 female, but clubs no longer have to have a member of each gender in the run, swim and board legs e.g. you could have 2 male runners, 2 female swimmers and a male & female board paddler. This will make team formation easier for clubs to administer and improve participation opportunities.

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