



Scottish Rowing
Racing Control Committee
Preparation for racing

Introduction

With the approach of the 2018 regatta season I would like to draw the attention of Clubs, coaches and rowers to some points which will help everyone to have a good experience at this year's regattas.

Competition licence

Make sure that SR Memberships are up to date before people enter events.

Substitutions

Any changes to the crew names on the original entry must be notified to the regatta organisers, in writing, before the crew's first race. (For the avoidance of doubt, you cannot substitute a single sculler.)

Safety - Heel restraints, bow balls and hatches

During the 2017 regattas at Strathclyde Park a number of boats had inadequate heel restraints or poorly attached bow balls.

These are basic safety features which should be in place at all times and not just at regattas, so there is really no excuse for failure at a regatta.

Crews should be trained to check these items before they come anywhere near the boating area.

Failure at the landing stage disrupts a crew's race preparation, and is particularly unsettling for Junior and Novice crews.

These less experienced crews will often lack the knowledge and equipment to fix problems and lose valuable time trying to locate coaches or club members who are able to assist.

Hatches covering watertight compartments should be checked regularly to make sure that they are in fact watertight. Leaks can develop where the hatch mounting is sealed to the deck. Damage or wear to hatch covers can mean that they are no longer fully watertight when closed. Hatch covers should be closed when the boat is on the water.

Crew uniforms

Rule C7 of the SR Rules of Racing states.

Every competitor shall wear the colours of the Club that he represents.

Some crews have been wearing a motley collection of kit at recent head races. This presents a poor image of the sport, is unhelpful to spectators and can complicate the identification of crews by umpires and event organisers.

We are in the process of compiling a new directory of Club colours, based on the annual returns provided to Scottish Rowing by the Clubs. Crew uniforms will be checked at regattas and Rule C7 will be strictly enforced.

The weather in Scotland often leads to rowers wearing extra layers of kit under their Club's racing uniform. If these extra layers are not of the same colour as the main part of the crew uniform then every crew member who is wearing an extra layer should wear the same (e.g. white t-shirts under the Club racing kit).

We recognise that from time to time Clubs change their kit, and that not all members will necessarily have the new kit. In this situation a crew should race either all in the new kit or all in the old kit. We are aware of at least one Club which has gone to considerable lengths to manage this in the past year and it has been a great help to officials in identifying their crews at regattas.

Local rules and information

Most regattas produce useful local information setting out the course, registration details, and so on. All rowers should be encouraged to make themselves familiar with these and not to rely on coaches or Club officials to keep them right.

In particular, crews should:

- understand the circulation pattern and any marshalling instructions, and keep to them
- be aware of the race timetable
- arrive in plenty of time at the start

Basic skills

Younger and less experienced crews at their first regattas will inevitably take more time to get into position and to carry out manoeuvres.

Umpires and event organisers will be prepared for this.

It is clear, however, that some crews are turning up at regattas having had little or no preparation for anything other than moving their boat forwards in a more or less straight line.

Inability to manoeuvre effectively in the start area causes crews to become flustered at a time when they should be calm and concentrating on the race which they are about to start. It also causes delays and disruption to better-prepared crews.

Before crews come to race for the first time they should be:

- clear which person in the boat is in charge
- able to turn their boat in its own length
- able to back their boat in a straight line for at least two lengths
- understand how to make minor changes to the direction of a stationary boat with as little forwards or backwards movement as possible

Further preparation is needed before crews race at Strathclyde Park or any other location which requires crews to attach to stakeboats.

Key points here are:

- understanding the effects of any cross-wind, and adjusting position and line of approach accordingly
- practicing backing on to a fixed mark
- keeping the approach to the stakeboat as short as possible when backing down
- learning how to hold the bows of the boat into the wind

Umpires regularly see crews:

- backing down on the down-wind side of their own lane and getting blown into the crew in the next lane
- turning several lengths away from the stakeboat and having to back for a considerable distance
- being unable to get the stern close enough to the stakeboat to get attached
- pulling their boat off the stakeboat when attempting to alter the direction they are pointing in

The basic skills listed above are all things which can be coached and practised.

Some very young crews have no problems. Some inexperienced Novice crews handle themselves well. Some crews who train on sheltered waters cope with cross winds at the Park. The key is preparation.

Umpires and regatta organisers will always make some allowance for inexperienced crews, but in the end it is unfair to keep properly prepared crews waiting at the start and cooling off while poorly-prepared crews attempt to get into position.

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Racing Control Committee
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