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WELSH SEA ROWING ASSOCIATION

WSRA Guidance on Organising Events

The procedure

There are several aspects to hosting an event. These include the following:

- The paper work
- Risk Assessment
- Appointment of officials
- Laying a course
- Safety cover
- The race
- Disputes
- Presentation
- Hospitality
- Results submission

The dates of all WSRA affiliated league and non-league events are set at the WSRA AGM (usually January). Clubs wishing to host events should submit their potential dates and Risk Assessment to the WSRA secretary secretary@welshsearowing.org.uk at least 10 days prior to the AGM. The WSRA secretary will attempt to schedule the events as requested by all clubs. However, scheduling the first choice of dates for all clubs is very rarely possible. Clubs are therefore requested to submit their 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice of date for their event. All dates will be finalised at the AGM. Any date change after this must be ratified by the WSRA committee. Events that haven't been ratified by the WSRA will not be insured through the WSRA. If the event is insured through another body, the WSRA still needs to be notified if WSRA clubs are to enter for the 3rd party insurance of the clubs to be valid.

Choosing a date

It is important to understand the tides in your area. Whilst the WSRA can provide some guidance to clubs about race dates, every area has its own unique tidal conditions that determine when and where racing can take place. Check the tides and choose conditions that will allow the day's racing to take place in the middle of the day. Very early starts will cause difficulty for clubs travelling from far away, as will late finishes. Make sure there will be enough water for race conditions for the entire period of racing. Choose more than one possible date and submit this to the WSRA secretary along with the Risk Assessment.

Risk Assessment

Race Risk Assessments should be carried out and submitted to the WSRA secretary at least one week prior to the WSRA AGM. Without a Risk Assessment, race requests will be turned down. Risk Assessments should cover all aspects of the race day, from parking at the event to all aspects of water safety. Rowers and coxes of all abilities and ages must be considered,

although it can be assumed that all racing coxes are competent. If possible, a rough weather alternative should be considered (i.e. a more sheltered course).

Race notice

Race notices should be prepared at least 3 weeks prior to an event and sent to the secretary@welshsearowing.org.uk, to be forwarded to the WSRA email list and placed on the website. Race notices sent only a few days prior to an event risk the secretary being away and failing to send out the notice in time. Race notices should include the following information as a minimum:

- Location – exact location of club/parking/trailer parking – a map is helpful
- Date of event
- Time of registration opening, time of cox's brief and approximate time of first race
- Name of race officials – club and league
- Contact name and number for race decision, and approximate time of decision

Race decision

The final decision of whether a race will go ahead is usually made on the morning of the event. Some events may be cancelled the day before if the weather forecast is sufficiently poor. The race decision should be made in accordance with the race Risk Assessment. Race decisions should be made sufficiently early in the day to allow clubs travelling furthest to be informed of whether the event will be held **before** setting off. This may require race decisions to be made 3-4 hours before registration.

Signage

Whilst not essential, it can often be helpful to provide signs to the rowing event to aid competing clubs who may not be familiar with the area.

Parking

Hosting clubs should ensure there is an area in which trailers may be parked for the duration of the event. Hosting clubs should also ensure that there is sufficient parking for competing crews, although this does not need to be provided free of charge if the only parking in the area is pay-parking. It may be necessary to inform the local council about the event to ensure sufficient parking is available.

Registration

All competing crews are required to register in their race category. Sufficient time should be allocated to registration to ensure all crews have registered before racing commences. WSRA registration forms can be found here. Clubs must fully complete the registration forms and must not be permitted to race unless the form is fully completed and signed. All crew members should be affiliated to the WSRA (including the cox). In league events, crews **MUST** nominate a category for league points. It is not the responsibility of the host club to nominate categories. Hosting clubs must retain this information for submission of results. Recommended costs for races are £5 per crew member (including cox) per day. Crews racing more than one race will not be charged twice. Juniors should be charged no more than £2.00

Race order

Races will be held in the following order:

- Ladies
- Seniors
- Juniors
- Mixed

Race categories

Please see race categories for more information
Briefly, the following categories are recognised by the WSRA:

- Seniors
- Senior veterans
- Senior Supa-veterans
- Ladies
- Ladies veterans
- Ladies Supa-veterans
- Mixed
- Mixed veterans
- Mixed Supa-veterans
- U18 Boys
- U18 Girls
- U18 Open
- U16 Boys
- U16 Girls
- U16 Open

- Double yole – seniors
- Double yole – ladies
- Double yole - mixed
- Single yole – seniors
- Single yole – ladies

Of these, seniors, senior veterans and senior supa-veterans will be conducted in the same race. Ladies, ladies veterans and ladies Supa-veterans will be held in the same race. Mixed, mixed veterans and mixed supa-veterans will be held in the same race. All junior categories will be held in the same race. Where there is a very small number of junior crew, this event may be merged with the ladies race, provided sufficient boats are available to do this. Yoles will be included in the relevant longboat category.

All of the above categories MUST be awarded a trophy if there are entrants. Currently there is no requirement for trophies for each yole category, but their results should be recorded. All junior crews should be awarded a certificate for each of their team members in conjunction with U16 and U18 trophies.

Race marshalling

There should be a single nominated person within the host club as the club official. This is the person to whom all racing complaints and appeals should be made.
There will also be a league official who will oversee the event on the day. This person must be a member of the WSRA committee who is not a member of the host club. If complaints or appeals are made to the club official, an investigatory hearing shall be conducted, chaired by the league

official.

Marshals should be posted to ensure racing rules are followed at all times, and to discourage and monitor unsportsmanlike behaviour. Specific areas to be marshalled should include start lines, buoy turns and finish line. Marshals MUST be familiar with the rules of racing, according to WSRA regulations. Marshals must not interfere with boats that are racing and must act in a professional and impartial manner. Complaints regarding race marshals should be submitted to the club official or the WSRA official.

Safety officer and first aiders

There should be a nominated safety officer, who should be aware of the sea state and weather conditions throughout the day. If conditions deteriorate, the safety officer may suspend or cancel the event at any time.

There will be a nominated first aider in attendance at all events. This person must be identified during the race briefing. Any incidents requiring medical attention should be directed toward the first aider. There should be a first aider available at all times. This may require more than one nominated first aider.
N.B. Some clubs have chosen to use visual displays to direct people to first aiders by way of a first aid arm band. This can be useful during crowded situations.

Official boats

Boats should be provided for the following purposes:

- Lead boat – The lead boat will drive around the course in front of the racing flotilla such that the coxes can see what course to take. Lead boats should not drive so far in front of the flotilla that the lead cox cannot see their position, nor so close to the flotilla that any crew is affected by the wash from the lead boat. The lead boat should display flags as followed: green flag – race under way under normal conditions; yellow flag – change of course, follow lead boat; red flag – race cancelled, follow lead boat for safe course. Organising clubs should ensure the correct flags have been provided to the lead boat.
- Start line – a race official should be positioned in such a way that the start line may be marshalled. Race starts can be conducted mid-water or on the beach. See race starts.
- Finish line – crews and times should be recorded at the finish. In some circumstances it may be possible to marshal a finish line from a jetty or pier, or other suitable structure.
- Buoy turns – there should be a marshal placed a short distance from buoy turns to ensure the race rules concerning buoy turns are observed. Photographs on the buoy turn can also be very useful.
- Safety boat – to provide assistance to any crews requiring it. Safety boat ratio – one safety boat per 6 competing crews in each race, with a minimum of 3 safety boats in attendance. Safety boat crew should all be competent boat handlers and be prepared to conduct a rescue of an entire rowing crew. WSRA recommend a minimum level of qualification of a RYA Level 2 Certificate or equivalent, for the helm. N.B. A Jet Ski with Back Board can be used as an extra safety vessel (*Exec Meeting 6 August 2016*), but not in place of the minimum 3 safety boats as stated above. The person in control of the craft must have a RYA PWC (Personal Water Craft) Certificate of Competence and must maintain control of the craft, whilst a second person must be on board to assist persons in trouble.

It is possible for a single boat to perform multiple functions, but please note that the spread of

the field should be considered and the safety of all crews is paramount. The slowest crews may be the ones most likely to require assistance. Please note that these boats will create wake when moving. Official boats should take care not to interfere with the progress of competing crews.

Official boats may provide assistance to crews in difficulty without crew penalty as long as no additional crew member is added to the boat and no advantage is gained by the competing crew. For example, a capsized crew may be assisted back into the boat by a safety boat and remain in the race, as long as the safety boat does not change the composition of the crew or provide powered assistance. Injured crew members may be removed from a boat and the remaining crew allowed to continue without penalty.

It is advised that the local RNLI & coastguard are informed in advance of all races. This may include submitting a Risk Assessment. Clubs should not rely on the assistance of the RNLI for safety cover as the lifeboat may be called out elsewhere.

Placement of the course

Courses should be marked by large buoys, ideally inflatable or otherwise soft buoys. Large metal markers may in some circumstances be used, but attention should be drawn to the potential hazards during the coxes' briefing. It is also possible to use land features (e.g. islands etc.) to mark a course, but crews should be warned of potential hazards and safe passing distances in these areas. The course should be simple in design, comprising an initial leg of no less than ¾ to 1 mile before the first turn (or 10-15 minutes) if directionally assisted to minimise clashes at the first turn. Out and back courses are acceptable, particularly if using a land feature rather than a buoy, but triangular or square courses are preferred. If an out and back course is set, a double buoy to separate outgoing and incoming crews should be considered. Courses should be set to last approximately 30-40 minutes for seniors (around 4 miles), 25-35 minutes (around 3 miles) for ladies and mixed, and no more than 20 minutes (2 miles maximum) for junior races. Courses should be assessed on the day to determine if weather and tide conditions would lengthen the course beyond these guidelines. Courses should not be set that require crews to cross with other crews between buoys. A diagram of all courses should be made available to crews at the coxes' briefing.

Placement of start and finish lines

Finish lines should be ideally placed in a spectator friendly place. It should be clear to crews where the finish line is. Finishes should be marked by an audible signal.

Start lines may be on the shore or mid-water. See starting the race. Starts and finishes should be within a reasonable distance from the boating area.

Coxes'/Safety briefing

Before racing commences all coxes and other interested crew must be gathered to attend a briefing. The following information should be included:

- Details of the officials
- Details of the first aider(s)
- Times of the races
- Details of the course
  - routes
  - buoys (and a reminder of the rule concerning buoy turns)
  - distances
- Details of official boats

- start
- lead
- scrutineers
- finish

Details of starting procedure
Details of finish procedure
Safety information

Clubs should be reminded that all coxes are to wear life jackets at all times and that all junior rowers/coxes MUST wear a life jacket at all times. Crews failing to adhere to this rule will be disqualified.

Entry to water

A safe area should be designated for crews to enter the water. Sufficient time should be left between races to ensure crews can reach the start in time where boats are used for multiple events. Where there is limited launch space, organising clubs are encouraged to provide a launch marshal.

Race starts

A 5-10 minute warning should be issued to crews on shore to enter the water in preparation for the race – variations on distance from the shore to start line must be considered when alerting crews. Once the start boat sees a reasonably straight line, they will raise a red flag and the race can be underway any time after this point by dropping the flag and sounding a horn (audible sound optional). Dropping of the flag must be the minimum signal to start the race. This ensures a simpler start procedure and less waiting time on the start line.

Shore starts – All crew should be permitted to sit ready in the boat. The cox may either have one foot fully on the floor ready to push off the boat, and their other foot in the boat, or they may choose to sit fully in the boat and have a shore based person holding the boat until they are permitted to start. The cox should be able to maintain control of the boat at all times. Provision should be made for uncoxed crews (e.g. double and single yoles). Race notices should identify where races include beach starts to ensure coxes bring appropriate footwear/change of clothes.

Start lines must be wide enough to accommodate all crews in a single line, without significant oar overlap. Whilst it is the responsibility of the cox to prevent oar clashing, narrow start lines create unnecessary hazards and are detrimental to the sport. Start lines should be constructed such that no position holds significant advantage over any other.

*2014 season – All races must have an independent scruitineer on the start for timed events and mass starts.

Marshalling the start line

Crews will inevitably drift over the start line. Marshals should discourage crews from approaching the line too early as the line cannot be held. Ideally, races should not be started with the current flowing in the race direction as this hinders crews to maintain position. Crews over the marked line should be told to move back across the start line to ensure a fair start. In some cases, where there is no advantage being gained a race should be started in a rolling manner where once racing crews have formed a line the race is started, regardless of whether this is in line with the buoys. Crews behind the line may need to be told to move forward of the line.

Clubs need to have an independent scruitineer/marshall at the start

Timed races

Whilst a mass start race is preferred, this may not be possible in all venues. In a timed race every care must be taken to ensure the start time and finish times are recorded for every crew to ensure correct calculation and validation. These records should be made available to the league official during the race day. A competent person should undertake the calculation of times. The start for timed races may be from a standing or rolling start, but the procedure should be explained during the coxes' briefing.

Clubs hosting timed races need to have an independent scruitineer/marshall at the start

Rules of racing

Whilst the race is underway, there should be a lead boat in front of the flotilla displaying the appropriate flag. Turns should be marshalled to ensure the rules of racing are followed. Coxes in races are assumed to be competent and knowledgeable of the WSRA rules of racing. Marshals should also be aware of the rules of racing and should enforce these rules where appropriate by the use of verbal warnings at the time and time penalty/place penalty/disqualification in consultation with the race officials. Please note that the rules of priority in sea rowing are NOT the same as in fine rowing or in yachting. Buoy turns should be marshalled, ideally using video footage for use in appeals.

Finish

The winning crew will be the first crew to pass a fixed finish line, or in the event of a timed event the crew with the least time taken to complete the course. The finish line should be well marked and the finish marked with an audible signal to ensure crews know when they have finished. A finish marshal should be positioned to see directly across the line in order to establish positions and times of racing crews. All crews should be marked across the line.

Challenges and appeals

Where infringements of the rules have occurred, penalties may be applied to crews, including time penalty, position penalty and disqualification. Points penalties may also be made by the officials. This decision should be made in conjunction with the race and WSRA official, plus independent scruitineer/marshall where appropriate. Crews may appeal to the officials against the racing behaviour of another crew. This will be followed by a meeting, if necessary, with the remaining race officials. Officials may interview any parties involved in the race to help provide a judgement.

Competitors who disagree with the judgement will have the right to appeal. The appeal is to be ratified by all members of the executive committee who are present at the event, prior to the next league race.

Removal of boats from the water

After the last event, all boats should be removed from the water. Assistance may need to be provided to some crews, particularly if the landing area is small and the trailer parking is more than a very short distance away. Again, the use of a slip marshal may assist.

Provision of food

The race fee is expected to include the provision of food for the rowers and coxes after or during

racing. The nature of this food is up to the organising club but has previously included buffet style food, burgers/hot dogs, or a large pot of cawl/chilli/pasta with bread. The food should be reasonably substantial as clubs may have travelled considerable distance to participate. Vegetarian options should be available. An appropriate amount of food should be provided. Competing clubs should assist by ensuring that entry numbers are estimated in advance. If food is available throughout the day, it should be considered that some rowers (notably juniors and those racing mixed) may not wish to eat until the end of racing. These rowers should not be faced with no food. At some venues food is also sold to rowers/spectators. It should be ensured that this food is not the food reserved for rowers who have not yet eaten.

Please ensure good food hygiene is followed throughout. Cooked food should be kept separately from raw food and utensils should not be mixed. If a BBQ is used, be aware of potential fire risks and food safety risks. Cooked food must be cooked throughout – please don't give your participants food poisoning! If food is prepared in advance, ensure correct storage is observed.

Presentation

Following the day of racing there should be a presentation of results. For each race, the full results should be available, including positions and times of all crews. The positions and times of every crew should be read out in reverse order. The winning crew in every category should be awarded a trophy. Every category should have a trophy awarded if there was a participant in the category. Several clubs award all junior crews certificates for the non-winning positions.

Results

Results should be compiled as quickly as possible and sent to results@welshsearowing.org.uk within a week after the event. It is vital that the form supplied by the WSRA for results compilation is used to ensure the minimum extra work for WSRA officials and to ensure the correct counter checks can take place. Care must be taken to ensure that the following information is correctly transcribed from the registration forms:

- Crew Name – if a crew is named a different name between events the WSRA compiler will assume these are intended to be different crews; e.g. If a club enters one race as 'The jolly pirates' and another race as 'Men's A team', these are 2 different crews. Do not change the name that the participant has entered. A crew may not change the entry after the race has started; e.g. if the club has entered an 'A crew' and a 'B crew', the winning crew cannot be designated the 'A crew' for points purposes.
- Category for points – Enter only one category for club points. This must be designated at registration and cannot be changed after the event. Clubs may designate any category for which they are eligible. Hosting clubs should transcribe the category *exactly* – do not assume a veteran crew wishes to collect veteran points if they haven't designated this on the form.
- Position – every crew must be entered with a position in the race. In the event of dead heats for any place, it is vital that this is made clear on the returns. Clubs entered with the same time but successive numbers will not be assumed to have been in a dead heat.

Points are allocated at 30 points for first place, 29 points for second place, 28 points for third place etc. regardless of the category of the crew being awarded those points, e.g. a Senior veterans crew may achieve 30 points coming home in first place, followed by a senior crew who would be awarded 29 points as second boat home.

Trophies

All winning crews must be awarded a trophy. It is the responsibility of the host club to ensure all trophies are returned by the event day. Clubs should be contacted in advance to remind them to

return trophies. Host clubs should keep records of where trophies have been awarded and whether a trophy was taken away. Winning crews may choose not to take a trophy home if they wish. This should be recorded. It is NOT ACCEPTABLE to tell winning crews to contact previous winners to retrieve a trophy. Trophies should be tasteful with a suggested value of £50 each.

Summary

- Prepare well in advance
- Read the relevant documentation
- Complete forms in detail and submit in good time
- Get as many people involved as possible.
- Set a safe course
- Apply the rules of racing fairly
- Adjudicate on disputes calmly but decisively
- Enlist support from other clubs and exec. members
- Keep competitors informed
- Use your common sense and experience
- Err of the side of safety

At the end of the day, congratulate yourself, and your club members, for managing to host an event!