

# ROWING REFEREE TRAINING MANUAL

**A Training Manual for Candidates and  
Newly Licensed Referees of the  
United States Rowing Association**



**The Referee Commission  
2010 Edition**



## PREFACE

This training manual has been developed to assist in the education and development of United States Rowing Association (USRowing) candidate and recently licensed Assistant Referees.

This manual reflects the USRowing *Rules of Rowing*—the official rules, regulations, and procedures for the sport of rowing—as they exist at the time of printing. The *Rules* may at times be revised or amended; where any discrepancies exist between this manual and the *Rules*, the *Rules* take precedence. Candidates, Assistant Referees, and Referees should stay abreast of any changes in the rules, which are published by:

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The *Rowing Referee Training Manual* is not for commercial use or commercial distribution. It may be reproduced by members of the United States Rowing Association for their personal use.

This training manual is designed to be used in conjunction with the study of the *Rules of Rowing* and the material provided and discussed in clinics.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Success in the sport of rowing is predicated on one very specific factor: Teamwork. Volumes have been written on this key ingredient for achievement. We will not add to that body of work except to acknowledge that this manual is the product of a large group of people and organizations who came together to ensure that this manual was revised and distributed in a timely fashion, at an exacting level of accuracy.

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In presenting this grant to the USRowing Referee Commission, the ECAC rowing community of administrators, coaches, and athletes recognized "... the professional services and personal contributions annually given by hundreds of licensed rowing referees throughout the country, especially to collegiate rowing... The impact of their role in the growth of college rowing cannot be overstated."

Notes about Second Edition: As we prepare to send the second edition to print, we started to reflect on the changes since the first edition was published in 2002. The first being the increase in the number of active referees. While we have no sure way of substantiating this claim, we would like to think that the first edition contributed in some small way to supporting that growth. We believe that this manual is an excellent recruitment, training and retention tool. Therefore, we will again distribute a copy to each referee to use as they deem best, be it to refresh their own skills through review, or to share with someone they hope to inspire to become a referee. The second change is the impact of technology on the number of ways we can deliver training. In 2002, we were still heavily dependent on printed material. Today, almost all our training materials are available electronically. And yet, we still like to hold nice printed copies in our hands from time to time, so thanks once again to the generosity of the ECAC, we are able to satisfy that need to touch and feel this valuable training resource. Finally, we recognize the need to review and refresh this tool more often than once every eight or so years. We will be examining ways to ensure a more robust review, revision and publishing cycle is established for this manual.



Photo by: The Fritz Family

## Dedication

This Second Edition of the Referee Training Manual is dedicated to the memory of  
Colonel William H. Fritz, United States Army (Ret.)  
Athlete, Scholar, Soldier, Referee

# Rowing Referee Training Manual

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Getting Started as a US Rowing Referee

United States Rowing Association (USRowing) Referees are trained to ensure two fundamental requirements at rowing regattas at all levels of competition throughout the United States: Safety and Fairness.

**Safety.** Rowers must be protected from hazardous conditions resulting from weather, water, boat traffic, or mechanical failures. Safety is vital and absolute; it outweighs all other aspects of officiating.

**Fairness.** Referees must work to provide a competitive environment that is fair to all crews and must ensure even-handed interpretation and application of the rules.



Photo by: Row2K

Being a Referee is a voluntary activity. Expenses usually are not reimbursed. Your commitment of time is an essential part of the work. Most Referees find the camaraderie of working with other Referees who enjoy rowing—and the interaction with rowers and coaches—to be the most fulfilling part of this avocation.

Referees try to stay in the background. We support the sport by ensuring safety on and off the water and providing fair and impartial competition. We want everyone involved—rowers, coaches, volunteers, and spectators—to enjoy the sport.

Being a Referee is a long-term commitment that requires continuing education and dedication. You will constantly learn new things about rowing, officiating, and competitive situations. You will be required to apply your knowledge of the rules and your experience to make crucial, rapid judgments—occasionally in the face of strenuous disagreements by rowers, coaches, and sometimes fellow officials.

To obtain your Assistant Referee license, you must work as a candidate Referee. During this period, usually completed in one season, you will fulfill the following requirements:

- Attend at least one Referee clinic
- Complete observations, under the supervision of licensed Referees, of six positions: Referee, Starter, Judge at Start, Chief Judge, Marshal, and Control Commission/Dockmaster
- Pass an exam administered by a clinician Referee.

You will be required to become a member of the USRowing, certify that you can swim, and obtain required equipment.

If you find this work appealing, we hope you will seriously consider becoming a USRowing Referee. It is not always easy or comfortable work, but it is seldom boring and it is often gratifying. To learn more about becoming an official, contact any USRowing Referee; if you don't know one, call USRowing headquarters at 609-751-0700 or 1-800-314-4769. The USRowing staff will assist in locating a member of the Referee Committee to help you begin.

This Referee training manual is prepared by referees for the nationwide use of candidates and new Referees. It may occasionally refer to places and situations specific to certain types of regattas or parts of the country. However, there are no regional differences in the basic standards of good officiating. The widespread and enthusiastic response to the first edition of this manual confirms that this manual will be used widely and will answer many of the questions for candidates and Assistant Referees. In addition, this manual serves as an excellent tool for more experienced Referees to refresh their basic skills.

Welcome aboard!

## 2. THE LICENSED OFFICIAL

A Referee is the licensed official of the United States Rowing Association (USRowing). USRowing, known as USRA, was founded in 1872 as the National Association of Amateur Oarsmen (NAAO); it is recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as the National Governing Organization for competitive rowing. Referees are considered representatives of USRowing in all their official duties. The following rank structure has been established for USRowing officials:

- a) Candidate
- b) Assistant Referee
- c) Referee.

A Referee that retires from active service may, at the discretion of the Referee Committee, be awarded the title of Referee Emeritus in recognition of significant service to the sport of rowing. Emeritus referees may assist at registered regattas, in accordance with the exceptions as identified in Rule 2-104b. (In 2001, USRowing replaced the title of Judge-Referee, which for many years had been used to describe rowing officials, with Referee.)

**Candidates** are not licensed by USRowing. The candidate period is the first step in becoming a licensed official. Anyone who meets the basic requirements can be a candidate. The process is simple: demonstrate interest by attending a regatta; ask the Chief Referee if you may observe; and have the Referee you observe sign your candidate observation card. You will need signatures for six observer positions, plus one verifying that you attended a clinic, to be eligible to take the examination for an Assistant Referee license.

Once a candidate has attended a USRowing Referee Clinic, observed six regatta referee positions at least once, demonstrated swimming ability, and passed the Assistant Referee exam, an Assistant Referee license is awarded (See Section 13, Advancing Through the Referee Ranks).

An **Assistant Referee** may perform any function at a regatta except the role of Chief Referee. An Assistant Referee may be considered for a Referee license after:

- (1) Performing successfully as an assistant referee for between two to four years
- (2) Demonstrating the ability to handle progressively greater responsibilities as defined in the Internal Operating Procedures (IOP) of the Referee Committee
- (3) Working at least 12 sprint regattas and 2 head races in specified roles.

The **Referee** license is the standard USRowing officiating license. To retain this license, a Referee must work at least four regatta days a year, officiate at a minimum of four different race courses within any two-year period, attend a Referee clinic each year, and work one National Standard Regatta (NSR) every other year. In addition, Referees must participate in a re-certification exam every four years.

**Emeritus** is an honorary title bestowed selectively by USRowing to selected Referees who have retired from an active role in officiating.

The **Referee Committee** is comprised of three at-large representatives, an athlete representative and a regional representative liaison. All committee members hold Referee licenses. The Commission acts on behalf of the USRowing Board of Directors to recruit, train, license, and evaluate officials; to review and recommend changes in or additions to the Rules of Rowing; and to appoint Chief Referees for Regional and National Championships and United States National Team Trials.

For complete details on the USRowing Referee Rank Structure, please refer to the Referee Committee Internal Operating Procedures (IOP). This document is updated annually and is available in the referee section of the USRowing web site at: [www.usrowing.org](http://www.usrowing.org)

**Role of the Referee:** The specific role of any Referee depends upon the assignment the Referee is given at the regatta. The term “referee” is generically applied to all USRowing officials. Referees are expected to exercise judgment in their interpretation of the rules. Much like rowing itself, that task becomes easier to perform only with time on the water. One commonly heard refrain among referees of all sports is: “*Good judgment comes from experience. Experience comes from bad judgment.*” That adage certainly is borne out in the world of rowing officials.

The **Chief Referee** is the official with overall authority at the regatta. The “Chief” must possess a Referee license. The Chief usually is the president of the Jury, which renders decisions on matters referred to it by the Chief Referee, such as protests. The Chief makes assignments of roles as described below and may delegate part of his or her responsibilities. Chief Referees are appointed by the Referee Commission for national and regional regattas and by the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) for other regattas.

The *Rules of Rowing* detail the primary duties of Officials, Please refer to Article II, Part A for specific details. There are four positions that require either an Assistant Referee or Referee license: Starter, Judge at Start, Referee, and Chief Judge. These positions are briefly described below:

The **Starter** is the official who manages the starting area and starts the races. In the event of an emergency or inclement weather, the Starter is responsible for ensuring that all athletes, volunteers, and referees within the Starting area are transported to a safe location.

The **Judge at Start** is the Referee who is solely responsible for calling false starts. The Judge at Start may align the crews or may be assisted by an “Aligner,” a person who performs the alignment function.

**Referees** are the officials that follow races down the course in motor launches. They keep the time for the winning boat and are responsible for observing the race to ensure safety and fairness.

The **Chief Judge** is responsible for determining the order of finish and finish times of all boats in the race. The Chief Judge supervises the finishline Judges. Finishline Judges are responsible for determining the order of finish for individual shells and recording the interval between the first place boat and the finish of other boats in the race. Finishline Judges may be volunteers; i.e., they need not be licensed officials. In the event of an emergency the race. Finishline Judges may be volunteers; i.e., they need not be licensed officials. In the event of an emergency or inclement weather, the Starter is responsible for ensuring that all athletes, volunteers, and referees within the Finishline area are transported to a safe location.

Two other important positions may be staffed or supervised by licensed Referees:

The **Start Marshal** patrols the starting area to ensure that all boats are present and ready to race. The Start Marshal organizes the crews who will be in the same heat or race and moves them into position to approach the starting line. Some large regattas assign a Finish Marshal to the area beyond the finish line area to assist crews at the end of races.

The **Control Commission** is supervised by Referees who monitor weigh-ins of coxswains; lightweight crews; and when called upon at larger events, boats; check for safety equipment and competitor compliance; and assist with Dockmaster operations as needed. Volunteers from the LOC may be used to help at this position.

**Membership:** As a referee, you must be an active member of USRowing. USRowing basic membership includes a subscription to the USRowing This Month e-newsletter. The Referee Committee sponsors an occasional newsletter, *The Clipboard*.

Many officials join the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO), the encompassing organization for all licensed officials. The NASO membership includes the magazine *REFEREE* and accidental injury insurance while officiating any sport. It is not mandatory that you join NASO.

**Liability Insurance:** As an official, you assume some liability and should consider several sources of liability insurance. Candidates and Referees are provided liability coverage by the USRowing insurance program during registered regattas.

Talk with your personal insurance agent about coverage provided by your homeowner’s or renter’s policy. Many “umbrella” insurance policies provide extensive liability insurance if services are performed for a charitable or not-for-profit organization.

A key limitation to many boat related liability policies is the length of the boat and the type of engine it has. Many policies limit the coverage to boats, such as your launch, that are less than 26 feet in length, less than 25 horsepower for an outboard, and less than 50 horsepower for an inboard engine. Fortunately, most launches at regattas fall well within those limits. In addition, if you should use your own boat, typically the coverage is only that of your own boat insurance. Candidates or Referees with questions about coverage at a specific event should contact the Chief Referee or call USRowing to determine if the regatta is registered. A registered regatta is officially and nationally recognized by USRowing as a safe and fair event and is operated under coverage provided by the USRowing insurance policy.

**Protocol:** The first principle of officiating is the welfare of the athletes with respect to safety and fair competition. Referees must think and act with impartiality and neutrality, irrespective of any past or present ties to rowing organizations or LOCs.

Referees conduct deliberations in private. Do not let the public, competitors, or coaches participate in deliberations. Listen to their concerns, thank them for their information, and politely excuse them. Make decisions in private, announce the final decision, and, if needed, outline the process for appeal.

Referees are gender neutral in the treatment of crews. Rowers are athletes and should be referred to as “crews,” “competitors,” and “rowers.” Races are announced as “Men’s” and “Women’s” races; for junior or scholastic competitions, they are announced as “Junior Men’s” and “Junior Women’s” races. Women are not referred to as “girls” and men are not called “boys.” Although the terms “ladies” and “gentlemen” are still appropriate, they may be considered inappropriate in some areas of the country.

Referees are *official*, but not *officious*. They are *approachable* but not *approaching*. An official’s job is to administer the rules of the sport in a calm, fair, and to the extent possible, unobtrusive manner.

Referees generally avoid becoming part of news media coverage. The story should be about the competition among the teams and rowers. However, Referees should promote the sport of rowing—and the importance of good officiating—with the media. Certainly, Referees should be willing (with the approval of the Chief Referee) to take reporters and photographers out on the water to capture the feeling of racing at close range—where doing so does not interfere with the Referee’s principal responsibilities and the rowers’ ability to compete.

Referees speak diplomatically. They never publicly criticize another official, coach, team, individual, or organizing committee. Problems are addressed in private with tact and discretion. Referees remain in the background, transparent but not invisible.

**Uniform:** The USRowing Referee dress uniform is khaki slacks or shorts, light blue shirt with a subdued-colored tie or light blue polo-style knit shirt, navy-blue blazer, and a dark blue, white, or khaki billed cap. USRowing-licensed officials wear the USRowing crest and official nametag. Many items are available from the USRowing Store; you can place orders online for most items by going to [www.usrowing.org](http://www.usrowing.org).



Photo by: Row2K

Although the dress uniform is considered appropriate attire for actively officiating at most regattas, the vagaries of climate and local weather require that a Referee be equipped to work under a broad range of conditions. Choose your clothing well because you may be exposed to the elements for long periods.

**Personal Flotation Device (PFD).** It is strongly encouraged that all Referees wear a PFD while on the water. It is necessary for personal safety and sets a good example for others.



Photo by: SportsGraphics

**Wet Weather.** Rain gear should be dark blue, gray, or black. Obtain gear large enough to go over warm clothing and a personal flotation device (PFD). Wear non-slip, waterproof footgear. Many Referees wear survival suits during the cold and rainy times of the year; these suits have built in PFDs and ensure that you stay warm and dry.

**Cold Weather.** Keep warm and dry. Wool or polyester fleece sweaters and hats tend to stay warm even when wet. Many Referees wear a vest-type PFD under their wet weather gear in cold weather. The vest type will keep you warm and afloat. Wet weather gear is a good windbreaker. A wool or polyester fleece knit hat is a good cold weather substitute for a baseball-style cap. Remember that it always feels colder on the water than on land and that you are likely to be exposed to that environment for a long period of time. Dress warmly in layers.

**Hot Weather.** Keep in mind that Referees, because they may be exposed to hot, sunny conditions for prolonged periods, are just as susceptible to heat exhaustion as an athlete. Shorts are an appropriate substitute for slacks or skirts and the blazer should be considered optional. (At some upper-level regattas, it is customary to wear the blazer during a championship final race.) If you are particularly susceptible to the sun, carry a broad-brimmed hat to wear between races and wear a long-sleeved shirt.

Avoid white or very bright colored (yellow, red, orange) outerwear or garment linings. Red flags are used to start and stop races, white flags are used to direct crews, and orange flags are used at the finish line. Emergency personnel often wear yellow. The important thing is to avoid providing any distraction to the competitors.

As an official, you may not wear or carry anything with a club or school insignia.

### 3. PRE-REGATTA ACTIVITIES AND GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In most cases, the pre-regatta activities are the responsibility of the Chief Referee. Watch what the “Chief” does: some day you may be Chief Referee.

#### General Officials’ Meeting

At large regattas, an officials’ meeting may be held with the LOC the day before the regatta to discuss general logistics, rules, staffing needs, and course requirements. At small or local regattas where most of the officials have worked together on the same course, this meeting may be conducted by telephone or early in the morning before the start of the regatta.

Chiefs work with the LOC long before the regatta to ensure that the items listed below are addressed:

- **Safety.** Using the USRowing Safety Checklist as a guide, chiefs coordinate with the regatta director to ensure that all aspects of safety are addressed. Even for events such as dual and tri-meets, this checklist is a valuable tool to ensure that the basic concerns are addressed. A key concern for the chief will be to ensure that an emergency plan for the regatta is developed and published prior to the regatta that addresses roles and responsibilities in case of inclement weather or other race day emergencies.



Photo by: Unknown, USRowing Official

- **Equipment.** Determine the availability and operating condition of launches, motors, radios, finish line flag, and other equipment.
- **Communication.** Determine the communications plan and availability and ability of devices such as radios to provide support.
- **Support Personnel.** Review volunteer requirements for such positions as launch drivers, finish line clerk, finish line flag person, stake boat personnel, and other necessary volunteers.
- **Facilities.** Survey the locations of the first aid station, bathrooms, drinking water, repair facility, and concession stands.
- **Signs.** Survey signage indicating the location of first aid and other facilities to ensure that it will be provided on race day. Inspect a map of the course and the traffic pattern.
- **Schedule.** Obtain sufficient copies of the regatta schedule and program for all officials. In addition, the Chief Referee and LOC should determine what the Inclement Weather Racing Schedule will be if needed; this should include in what order will races be cancelled (i.e., novice first) and who has the responsibility for these decisions.
- **Course Condition.** The chief will tour the course in a launch with an LOC representative to assess water conditions (water level, currents), areas susceptible to adverse wind conditions, and any obstacles. This inspection should occur well before race day so that any necessary corrective actions can be made. A final inspection tour the morning of the regatta, before racing begins, is recommended.
- **Weather.** Review typical weather and a current weather report with the LOC and discuss options in the event of bad weather. In general, at the first sight of lightning or sound of thunder, a regatta should be stopped and rowers directed to the nearest shore. **Any** official on the course may halt a race if he or she believes there is imminent danger from weather conditions.
- **USRowing Forms.** If this is to be a USRowing-registered regatta the Chief Referee completes forms that include specific requirements to qualify the regatta.
- **Coaches’ and Coxswains’ Meeting.** Specify the place and time for the meeting and review the agenda.

#### Officials’ Meeting

The Officials’ Meeting is best held before the Coaches’ and Coxswains’ Meeting. In this meeting, the Chief Referee sets the tone; he or she stresses important items, reviews protocol, and passes other information obtained from the race organizer. The Chief Referee should quickly review the Emergency Plan, to ensure a smooth implementation of the plan in cases of inclement weather or emergency. Always attend this meeting. The Chief Referee assigns the role each official will perform during the regatta. These assignments are typically made taking into consideration the following factors:

- **Safety.** Capable officials should be on the water where they can directly influence safety.
- **Experience.** Some regattas, courses, or conditions may require special officiating experience.
- **Training.** Professional development of inexperienced officials is a major duty of all licensed Referees. Every Referee should be able to cover each position competently. Assistant Referees should discuss (briefly) with the Chief where they need more experience; this discussion should take place before the regatta so the Chief can have time to adjust assignments as necessary. Assistant Referees should recognize that their requests can not always be accommodated due to safety constraints.
- **Physical Limits.** Some officials may not have the physical ability to be out on the water or on their feet for prolonged periods, especially in adverse weather. The Chief should plan to rotate the officials at least once, usually at mid-day.



Photo by: Robert Appleyard, USRowing Official

#### Coaches’ and Coxswains’ Meeting

This meeting may be held on the day or evening before the regatta but no less than one hour before the start of the first race. An LOC Representative, usually the Regatta Director, and the Chief Referee jointly chair the meeting. The Regatta Director should address the following items:

- Changes to the schedule of events and times
- Dock loading and unloading procedures
- Hot-seating
- Traffic Patterns
- Location of warm-up areas
- Safety issues

The Chief Referee should set the tone for the regatta by stating the nature of the regatta (e.g., championship, local club) and how the regatta will be conducted; that is, what exceptions to or modifications of the *Rules of Rowing* will be in effect. At a minimum, the following should be addressed:

- Officials’ priorities: (a) safety of the crews, and (b) fair racing.
- Official regatta time.
- Key safety rules and equipment requirements, including a review of the course map and the correct traffic pattern for the regatta course and warm-up/cool down marshaling area, if the LOC has not already provided that information.
- The starting procedures that may be used during the regatta.
- The race progressions, if not provided by the LOC.
- When, where, and how protests may be lodged. Describe how a protest statement is submitted.
- Any safety considerations specific to the course and warm-up areas: obstacles, shallow areas, and the limits of the warm-up and cool-down areas.
- Current and predicted water and weather conditions.

**Special Requirements:** Often, the Chief Referee will be asked to make decisions on special requirements or requests from the LOC, e.g., policies to accommodate the news media, VIPs following races, or special requests from crews. The Chief will render whatever decision is necessary to ensure that safety and fairness are maintained for the competitors.

**Press Coverage.** The LOC has a vested interest in continuing news coverage of rowing events in their area. It is important to the growth of the sport and the success of their regatta. The needs of the news media and the LOC need not conflict with a safe, fair regatta. The news media may have a limited understanding of the sport of rowing and may require helpful support to write a credible story. Often times, the LOC can accommodate the news media in a separate launch with a LOC official. However, if needed, news media can be assigned by the Chief Referee to ride with a Referee who has rowing and/or media experience.

**Radio Etiquette:** Hand-held electronic communications equipment (VHF and UHF marine radios, hand-held CB radios, personal communicators, cell phones, direct connect cell phones, etc.) has become indispensable for timely regatta communications, on and off the water. On-air communications should be limited to those directly related to logistical and operational issues relevant to the safe and fair conduct of the regatta.

Remember that any transmissions via radio are broadcast to most other Referees and LOC officials—and may be overheard by coaches, rowers, or spectators. As with most other forms of communication at a regatta, *“less is more.”* Radio discussions, therefore, should be restricted to informational inquiries, emergencies, and logistical needs. Unrelated chatter, joking, or personal observations should be kept off the air. Constructive criticism of fellow referees should be held for the referee meeting following the regatta. It is very important to *listen* to your radio. You can pick up the drift of things, understand the priority or crisis of the moment, position yourself to assist, or simply not get in the way, without saying a word. Listen before you speak so you do not interrupt a transmission/conversation in progress—it can cause confusion and delay. Listening can save you time when line-ups for finals, coxswains weights, or race changes are announced—you have the information in advance should you need it.

The Chief will announce which channel will be the open conduit for all regatta-wide radio communications. Each radio should be tuned to that channel so that every Referee can be contacted as needed.

In most areas, the LOC provides radios to all Referees, although some officials prefer to purchase their own units. It is good practice for each Referee to determine that fresh or recharged batteries are available for each unit, how the radio operates, and that the unit is working properly. Referees should respect the radios provided by the LOC; often the cost to the LOC for lost radios can exceed \$500.

In some instances, the Chief Referee, Starter, or Finish Line Judge may have a specific question or issue to discuss in private. In this case they may switch radio channels or utilize other communication devices, such as cell phones. It has become common for the Chief to distribute a cell phone list of needed numbers prior to the Regatta. As easy as it may be to use cell phones today, it is important to remember that SOME communication should be broadcast over the radio. If you are in receipt of information given over a cell phone, for example weights or progressions, be sure to communicate it as appropriate with other Referees. Again, it is the application of the ‘less is more’ principle.



Photo by: Row2K

**Working with Launch Drivers:** Referees must rely on their launch drivers to safely and responsibly aid them in carrying out their assignments. A cooperative relationship between Referee and driver is essential to effective officiating. A knowledgeable and interested driver is an additional and valuable set of eyes and ears in the launch. Often a Referee will loan their driver a stopwatch so that the driver can act as a backup timekeeper.

When boarding a launch, introduce yourself to the driver, ascertain his or her level of experience, and answer any questions the driver may have about the boat or motor. Launch drivers are often parent volunteers who are relatively new to small motorboats and outboard engines. Even though many LOCs provide training for drivers, it takes time on the water and race experience for driving skills to be sharpened and for drivers to feel comfortable at the helm.

If you have particular preferences for how you want your launch operated, mention them in advance and explain why. Demonstrate to the driver the kinds of hand signals you will use. Be certain that drivers understand that wakes must be minimized on the water. Emphasize that drivers must be constantly vigilant about other boats and must follow the traffic patterns of the course. Explain where and how to enter the race course; if time allows, practice the entry with your driver to make them more comfortable with the procedure. Make sure you are clear on the manner Referee launches are to move on the course and how to disperse their wake correctly. The Chief Referee should cover this topic in your morning briefing. If they don’t, be sure to ask.

Be clear that you control your launch. There may be times when you must be quite assertive with your driver. It is best to tell drivers before leaving the dock that you may need to give instructions which demand immediate action. Review emergency procedures with your driver including their responsibilities when pulling a rower from a boat or the water or what to do should he/she or the referee be launched from the boat. Emphasize the need to wear the kill switch at all times.

Learn about your driver's connection to rowing and answer any questions about the role of the Referee. Your launch driver is a vital member of the officiating team. Ensure that his or her comfort is as well attended as your own. Make sure that your driver gets food and water and regular shore breaks as needed. Keep in mind that the launch drivers can end up spending as much time on the course as do you.

While it is not a requirement that Referees know how to drive a launch it is an important skill to acquire. It will help you relate to the launch drivers and you'll be prepared in the event an extra launch is needed on the water. If you would like to have more experience as a launch driver, ask coaches in the area if you can assist as a driver during practices or talk with the LOC about working as a launch driver.

Finally, you occasionally may find yourself with a driver who clearly is too inexperienced or uncomfortable on the water to operate your launch safely. Your first obligation is safety. Do not "tough it out" because you do not want to offend anyone. All volunteers are valuable, so be as discreet as possible but return to the dock and ask the LOC to provide another driver. Contact the Chief Referee for assistance if need be.

#### 4. THE CONTROL COMMISSION

The Control Commission provides on-shore oversight of all boats entering the launch area. In addition to equipment and safety issues, weight verification, and verification of competitors' status, the Control Commission allows officials to authorize substitution of competitors, replacement of ill or injured rowers, approval of uniforms, and confirmation of age and skill classifications.

A smoothly operating Control Commission is a team effort comprising the Chief Referee, the Regatta Director, the Dockmaster, weigh-in staff, Marshals, Referees, and LOC volunteers. A Referee License is not required for Control Commission positions; this makes the commission a good place for Candidates to begin their observation of regatta activities.

Control Commission responsibilities vary depending on the type of the regatta. There are four main levels of regattas: Local, Regional, National, and Trials. At all regattas, you should find boat safety checks, a Dockmaster, and a Start Marshal. If lightweight races are to be held, a weigh-in station must be provided and staffed. At Regional and National Regattas, athlete verification is required and at many regattas, including NCAA, Youth Nationals and trials, boats must be weighed.

**Weigh-ins:** Weigh-ins for coxswains and lightweight rowers are a somewhat mysterious and sensitive subject. The *Rules of Rowing* provisions on allowable weights are not asterisked, which means exceptions can be made to what is listed in the *Rules of Rowing*; always check with the LOC for special interpretations and guidelines. There are different rules for rowers and for coxswains, as well as different rules for different levels of competition. Because weigh-ins vary so much, the rules provide only limited guidance.

For men's lightweight rowing at registered regattas, the average weight for all rowers must be 155 pounds or less with a maximum weight of 160 pounds for any individual rower. For most junior lightweights, the men's maximum weight will be 155 pounds. For men's masters lightweight rowing, no individual athlete may weigh more than 160 pounds. Coxswains are *not* included as part of the boat average. For lightweight women, the maximum weight is 130 pounds; there is no crew average for women.

Coxswains of women's crews must weigh a minimum of 110 pounds and men's coxswains must weigh a minimum of 120 pounds. It is important to note that the "coxswain of a women's crew" is *not* the same thing as a "woman coxswain." Not all competitions require the coxswain to be of the same gender as the crew. Be sure you know what requirements are in effect for the regatta.

A coxswain lighter than the minimum weight must carry weight to bring them to the minimum. This weight must be carried close to the coxswain's torso; it cannot be distributed throughout the boat. The Dockmaster or the Control Commission officials at the dock should check this extra weight before the crew launches; it may be checked by the Starter and/or the Referees who follow the race. Cox boxes, tools, and clothing do not count as extra weight.



Photo by: Robert Appleyard, USRowing Official

At USRowing Trials, which are conducted in accordance with international rowing rules, the rules concerning weights are slightly different and weights are expressed in metric units. Women's coxswains have a minimum weight of 50 kilograms (kg). For men's coxswains, the minimum weight is 55 kg. However, no more than 10 kg of weight is permitted. Coxswains must be the same gender as the crew.

For rowers at Trials, women's crews must have an average less than or equal to 57 kg and no individual may weigh more than 59 kg. Men's crews must average 70 kg or less and no rower may weigh more than 72.5 kg.

Weigh-ins are to be conducted once each day for a particular event during a time period that usually begins two hours before and ends one hour before the scheduled time of the first race in which the weight is relevant. Athletes must be weighed in racing uniform without shoes. The LOC can designate the number of times an athlete can weigh in and any other special considerations. If an event is delayed after weigh-ins are complete, competitors need not re-weigh.

**Preparing the Weigh-In Area:** Before weigh-ins begin, you should prepare the area. Check your scales to ensure they are calibrated. If you have more than one scale, equalize them so that there is no discrepancy. Inform your volunteers about the process of weigh-ins, as well as proper weigh-in etiquette. Make sure you have the proper items for signifying crews that have weighed in, such as rubber ink stamps, wristbands, or colored ribbons. Confirm that you have a radio or cell phone numbers to inform the Dockmaster and the Starter about any weights that coxswains will be carrying. If possible, post your weigh-in procedures where crews can read them before weigh-ins begin to help the process move smoothly.

When the area opens, allow one crew at a time up to the scales. To minimize confusion, crews should be weighed in seat order. Make sure the coxswain has prepared the crew paperwork ahead of time; coaches for the crew weighing in are always welcome at the scales; however, other spectators should be discouraged. Record the weight, or quietly announce each weight to the scribe to record (without rounding numbers up or down), and do not make any other comments. Prioritize your "re-weighs" so that crews all have an equal chance to be weighed as well as to get to their race on time. When the crews weigh in successfully, remember to provide athletes who have made weight with whatever token has been established. Report all boats carrying weight, and the amount they will carry, to the Dockmaster, Control Commission, and the Starter. If an athlete or crew fails to weigh in or is unable to 'make weight' that information must be conveyed as well.

Weigh-ins are often a sensitive time for athletes, especially those that are near the maximum weight allowance. It is not uncommon for athletes who participate in a weight controlled sport to attempt unsafe practices (dehydrating techniques, purging, etc) when they initially do not make weight. As a Referee, the safety of the athlete is a paramount even when that is protecting the athlete from themselves. If you witness any activities that you deem unsafe but is not an emergency situation, bring it to the attention of the Chief Referee immediately so that the LOC and Coach can be involved and the safety of the athlete reviewed. If you believe the athlete is dehydrated or depleted enough to warrant medical attention, follow the proper emergency procedures. It is not often easy to be placed into such a position for the Referee and it may be uncomfortable, but as a Referee, to err in this case on the side of caution is key.

**Boat Safety:** There are five checks to be completed by the Control Commission to ensure the safety of a boat:

- Quick Foot-Release Provisions (Heel Tie-Downs)
- Bowballs
- Bow Numbers
- Coxswain's Cockpit (Bow-loading Shells)
- Oar Blades

*Quick Foot-Release Provisions.* The Rules state that the design of footgear must provide for the quick release of a competitor's feet in the event of an emergency (e.g., a capsize) without the use of hands. This is most commonly accomplished by heel ties or pull-strings attached to the heels of all shoes. These strings may extend to a maximum of three inches. Clog-type shoes are exempt from this rule provided that the athlete's feet are not tied in. This is an asterisked (\*) rule meaning that no exceptions or special interpretations may be made; a boat may not be launched if it is not in compliance. If time is short, the Referee may assist in the repair of a faulty heel tie if the coach or coxswain agrees.



Photo by: Unknown, USRowing Official

It is helpful when checking heel ties to have a standard 3-inch instrument that you use to measure every boat—this not only makes it simple, it provides consistency and credibility. A three-inch length from a ruler or yardstick is one solution.

**Bowballs.** Bowballs, white or fluorescent, must be supple or plastic, have a minimum diameter of four centimeters and must be firmly attached to the point of the bow. To check a bowball, wiggle it gently with your fingers but don't yank on it. The bowball should not turn to either side with pressure but remain directly in line with the bow. This is an asterisked (\*) rule; a shell without a bowball is dangerous on land and water.

**Bow Numbers.** Bow numbers, or markers, must indicate either the crew's lane assignment or the participant's registration number in a head race. This number should match what is published in the program. All crews should have a bow number to ensure that they can be properly identified at the finish of the race. Bow numbers are the crew's responsibility. At some regattas, the LOC provides bow numbers at the Control Commission station.

**Bow Loading Coxswain's Cockpit.** The opening for a bow-loading coxswain's cockpit must be no smaller than 70 centimeters (cm) long and be the full width of the inner hull for a distance of 50 cm. This space must be free from snags or obstructions that could impede a coxswain's escape from this space. Do not assume that all boats will comply—you must check. Many officials mark 70- and 50-cm points on their Referee flagpoles to provide an easy gauge.



Photo by: Row2K

**Oars.** All oars for a crew must be of uniform design and color unless the crew is a composite crew. A crew may have unpainted oars if all rowers in the crew have unpainted oars. The sweep oar must be 5 millimeters (mm) thick when measured 3 mm from the tip. The scull oar must be 3 mm thick when measured 2 mm from the tip. Vortex® blades (blades fitted with projections of the back side of the blade to induce turbulent flow) are permitted.

**Boat Safety Check Area:** When possible, check the boats before they approach the launch area. When to conduct this check is often a function of the regatta type, size, and site. Ideally, Referees should walk through the boat storage area well in advance of racing, marking inspected boats. If this is not possible, position Control Commission volunteers or Referees somewhere along the path to the dock to ensure the checks are made before the boats start down the ramp to launch. It is useful to have a couple of

sets of boat slings set up in the area to allow crews to put a shell down as you inspect it. Be quick, but thorough. Keep the shells moving.

If you find a problem, clearly tell the coxswain what is wrong, and where the crew can move its boat, if necessary, to make a repair. Prioritize your re-checks. Do not let crews make repairs or adjustments on the dock.

**Boat Weights:** You will not encounter the need to weigh boats at most local regattas but you will at Trials and some National Championship regattas. The crew winning a Trials event must have its equipment checked for compliance. However, the equipment of any crew may be checked at any time during the regatta. The crews should be provided with a facility to check the weight of its boat before racing.

The boat weight does **not** include the oars, detachable loudspeaker, or electronic equipment. Any item that is not permanently affixed to the boat is not included. Seats, slides, rudders, skegs, fins, and riggers are included in the boat's weight. You can find the minimum weights in the *Rules of Rowing*.

If a crew's equipment does not comply, the crew will not be placed. The Jury may have to decide whether to accept the race results without the offending crew or to have the race re-rowed.

Managing the area for a boat weigh-in is much like managing for athlete weigh-in. Check your scales with certified weights before the weighing process, and equalize the scales if you have more than one. Ensure that your scales are sturdy enough to hold the weight of the boat. Let one crew into the area at a time; the crew's coach is always welcome.

**The Dockmaster:** The Dockmaster controls the flow of the launching and landing racing shells and motor launches—deciding who gets space on which dock, when, and for how much time. The Dockmaster, who may be an LOC volunteer or a Referee familiar with the course's launching and recovery facilities, is the last line of defense for boat safety equipment checks.



Photo by: Row2K

If you are Dockmaster, attend the pre-race meetings to be sure you know who has scratched from what race and what crews will need to hot dock (switch a crew into a boat quickly to relaunch for another event) or hot seat (switch an individual athlete into a boat for another event). Know the launching window for the day—the intervals for the first and second calls—and try to adhere to this window. Give preference to the crews who are late to the dock so that every competitor has a chance to compete. Keep track of which crew launched and when—not only is this helpful to the starting area, it is a good safety measure. You must notify the Starter if any crews have launched late or failed to launch. Do not allow crews to leave equipment, shoes, or other items on the dock. Do a final check of the bowball and bow number before each crew launches. Make sure the coxswains know the traffic pattern and if necessary check if they are carrying weight.

If there are enough people, try to get an assistant to help you track which crews have launched and find missing crews. *Never* leave the dock unattended.

**Advertising:** Under rule 2-204 in the Rules of Rowing, advertisement is allowed on equipment and clothing by manufacturers of both the equipment and clothing and by sponsors of the crew or club; however, there are a few products which are prohibited by rule 3-204. Advertisements promoting tobacco products are prohibited at all regattas. For junior and scholastic events, advertisements promoting alcoholic beverages are prohibited. At other events, advertising for alcoholic beverages with alcohol contents of over 15% is prohibited. If the sponsor or manufacturer of a prohibited item provides a service or manufacturers non-prohibited items, they may advertise only if the advertisement clearly associates itself with the permitted product or service only.

Because rule 3-204 is asterisked, the sections of rule 3-204 will be enforced at all regattas. This rule extends throughout the duration of the regatta and throughout the regatta site.

**Athlete Verification:** Verification may include making sure each crewmember is a member of USRowing or if an international crew, a member of their National Rowing Federation, as recognized by either FISA (the international rowing federation) or the International Olympic Committee. Each crewmember must be a bona fide member of a club and may only represent one club at a regatta; exemptions are made only for composite crews and single scullers.

*Substitutions.* If the Chief Referee finds that illness or injury prevents a rower(except a single sculler)from competing, a substitution at any time before the event is completed may be made. Section 5-207 of the *Rules* provides the detailed rules regarding substitutions.

## 5. MARSHALS AT THE START AND FINISH

As rowing competitions have increased in size and complexity, the role of the Marshal at regattas has become increasingly critical. Often, the Marshal is the first and last contact rowers have with an official on the course. In the absence of conscientious Marshaling, a regatta can rapidly fall behind schedule and the danger of collisions and other mishaps can increase. A Start Marshal should be in position before the first crew launches and remain there until the last boat leaves.

Depending on the course configuration, Chief Referees may assign Marshals on both sides of a course: above the start and at the finish line to assist crews after races have ended. The position of Marshal is mentioned in the *Rules of Rowing* only in regard to head races. Nevertheless, the Marshal is now considered one of the most essential assignments at sprint regattas and is one of the six positions that Candidates must observe. The Start Marshal should possess a Referee license but it is only required for head races. This requirement can be waived for a head race if the LOC files a request with USRowing.

**Start Marshal:** Marshals are stationed in the starting area to control boat traffic and assist crews into the starting position to race. Warm-up areas vary in size and location. Marshals patrol the starting area to control congestion and maneuver boats into position so that they can move quickly to the start. Most experienced Referees will tell you that the most serious accidents occur in the warm-up area. Crews must be made aware of traffic patterns on the water before launching and may need frequent reminders. Safety in the Marshaling area is paramount; competent Marshaling requires constant vigilance and strategic thinking.



Photo by: SportsGraphics

A good Marshal becomes adept at identifying crews by its uniforms or oar blades as it arrives in the warm-up area. The Marshal makes visual contact with each crew and verbally verifies its identity, the event it will compete in, and its lane number. Crews often find it helpful to be informed how much time remains until their event. Marshals should check off each crew on the schedule as the crew passes.

Because Marshals work near the starting area, they should keep megaphone communications to a minimum in order to avoid distracting crews at the starting line or interfering with instructions or announcements being given by the Starter or Aligner. Typically, crews pass

close enough to the Marshal that they can hear unaided voice communications. Instructions should be given succinctly. It is important that, as Marshal, you verify that a crew has heard any instructions or advice you have given. Most coxswains or scullers will acknowledge with a nod, a wave, or eye contact—but be sure.

As Marshal, you must work closely with the Starter to facilitate on-time starts. You should establish with the Starter what procedures he or she wishes to follow. Some Starters prefer to be notified when all crews are assembled for the next race; others may only want to know about missing crews. In any case, avoid trying to communicate with the Starter when he or she is conducting a start. It is important that your launch not become an obstacle to crews approaching the start line. The goal is to maintain a smooth, timely flow of shells from the warm-up area to the starting line. You should remain in close radio contact with the Control Commission, Dockmaster, and LOC to determine the status of missing crews—it doesn't hurt to request a separate radio channel for these communications.

As Start Marshal, you must keep one eye on the current schedule, keeping track of races as they start—and the other eye four or five races into the future. The time to go looking for a missing crew is not at race time, but rather two or three races *before* (i.e., 10 to 20 minutes) the scheduled start of the event. If necessary, you should request volunteer assistance from the LOC, particularly when the warm-up area is large, boats are arriving from both sides of the course, or when race intervals are tight.

Marshals usually operate in areas where there is a high concentration of shells circulating in the warm-up pattern, practicing racing starts. As Marshal, you must stay constantly alert to traffic jams and violations of the traffic pattern. Severe or repeated violations of the traffic pattern are a serious safety issue as well as unsportsmanlike conduct. If necessary, you should issue a warning to an offending crew and inform the Starter of your action.

If a crew approaches with an equipment problem, don't attempt to make the repair unless it is a small task—such as reattaching a bow number—and the crew can't do it themselves. Repair of a shell from a floating launch is difficult. If you have a tool appropriate for a minor repair, offer it, and stay with the crew until the repair is made. If you find it necessary to effect a significant repair for a crew, *always* verify with crew that they are satisfied with the repair and inform the Starter of the repair which you made. Request help from a safety launch, near-by referee, or coach to help with serious problems. Your principal responsibility is the safety of *all* of the crews in the area.

**Finish Marshal:** When the water behind the Finish Line is cramped or crowded, Finish Marshals may be assigned to that area. If Finish Marshals are not available, the Referee who has followed the race should be prepared to act as the Marshal.

After a race has ended, the Finish Marshal visually checks each crew and looks for any signs of trouble, such as asthmatic attacks, heat stress, muscle cramps, or dehydration. If any rowers appear to be in real distress, the Marshal should motor near the boat and address the rower by seat number and ask if he or she needs help. If a rower needs to be removed and transported to shore, move quickly to assist and alert the emergency medical service on shore.

Traffic flows at the finish must be carefully monitored because exhausted crews can be unaware of other boats in its vicinity or other races coming down the course toward them. Finish Marshals may decide to escort some crews to less congested areas if necessary. Any crews that wish to cool down must be monitored to ensure that they follow the traffic pattern for that area.



Photo by: Row2K

Finally, Finish Marshals should look for any crews with hands in the air and make certain that the Referee for that race is aware that a crew wishes to discuss something.

## 6. STARTING PROCEDURES

The following section describes activities in the start area, including the starting procedures and commands, and the roles of the officials at the starting line in accordance with the *Rules of Rowing*. The starting procedure involves the Starter, Aligner, Judge at Start, and at least one Referee. In general, the starting area should be quiet and relaxed, with no unnecessary noise. Ideally, only the Starter's voice should be heard.

**The Starter:** As soon as practical (see below under "Start Line Management") after the previous race has started, the Starter announces the next event through a megaphone or public-address system: the event number and its description, the name of each competitor followed by its lane assignment, and if applicable, the number of crews advancing to the final. The starter will invite the crews to enter their lanes; crews should not enter the course until invited by the Starter. For example: *"Event number 9, Women's lightweight 8. Heat 1. Radcliffe, Lane 1; Penn, Lane 2; Boston University, Lane 3; [etc.]. Three crews will advance to the final. 5 minutes. You may enter your lanes."*

If the race is for single scullers, use the last name of the competitor, e.g.: "Event number 24, Men's Open Single. Smith, Lane 1; Riley, Lane 2; Wood, Lane 3; [etc.]."

Crews should be positioning themselves in their lanes and in the vicinity of the stake boats or starting platform. After the initial invitation to the crews to enter the course, avoid using excess words to announce the time to the event.

Announce: "Five minutes."

Announce: "Four minutes."

Announce: "Three minutes."

Announce: "Two minutes."

Each crew is responsible for being locked onto the starting platform or stake boat two minutes before the scheduled start of the race. Crews arriving late may be assessed a warning, e.g.: "*Penn, Warning; late to start.*" Penalties should not be assessed until all competitors are in position in order to ensure that the penalized crew hears the warning without distraction.

It is imperative that the Starter and the Start Marshal work together to keep the regatta on schedule, particularly at regattas with brief intervals, or "centers," between races or heats. As the Starter, you should not hesitate to issue reprimands or warnings to crews who delay the start of a race. Moreover, delaying starts for crews without permission (e.g., equipment problems) disadvantages those crews who did show up on time and are forced to "cool down" during the delay.

If all the competitors are present and ready to race before the scheduled race time, you may ask the crews if they would like to start early. You should only do this after assessing the safety of the course, for example, if single sculls were just sent down the course, you may elect to hold a heat of eights to ensure that the scullers finish safely or have a significant enough lead that the Eights are not in jeopardy of interfering in the previous race. If no crew objects, you may ask the Aligner to begin the alignment process early. There are no prohibitions about how early you may start a race, however, as a general rule of thumb, a race should not cross the finish line

before its scheduled starting time. The primary consideration when making scheduling changes is safety and fairness. Weather conditions may dictate starting a race as soon as it is ready to go, even if it is significantly early. However, remember that the crews are entitled to use the last two minutes for final preparation. You must avoid any intimidating body language or tone of voice in making your query.



Photo by: Row2K *foot; Lane 3, forward six inches.*"

**The Aligner:** When crews are attached to the stake boats/starting platform but no later than two minutes before the start, the Aligner, under the supervision of the Judge at Start, begins the process of aligning the bowballs of the shells. The Aligner addresses the boat holders by naming the lane and specifying the direction of movement and distance required to bring the shells into alignment, e.g.: "*Lane 1, back one*

As Aligner, you must be consistent, precise, and succinct in giving the direction and distance to move. The preferred terminology for direction is "forward" and "back" or "in" and "out." State distances in inches if the distance to be moved is less than a foot; state greater distances in feet. If you are using a megaphone, remember that many will hear whatever you say. As an Aligner, it is your job to understand how each stakeboat holder interprets your measurements. It may take several races before you are able to determine what 'one foot' means to the Lane 4 stakeboat holder. Provide direction to multiple stakeboat holders simultaneously; for example, do not wait for the stakeboat holder in Lane 4 to respond to your direction before directing Lane 3 in movement. You should be constantly scanning across all boats to move them best into position and giving directions as needed; aligning works best when all crews come into alignment at about the same time.

Many regatta venues now provide a "silent alignment" system in which the stakeboat personnel are provided headphones and receivers and the Aligner transmits directions over a private channel. With this system, which allows alignment to proceed without distracting rowers or interfering with the Starter's announcements, it is possible to begin aligning as soon as the first shell locks on.

At championship and elite regattas, an Aligner generally assists the Judge at Start. At most regattas, however, the Judge at Start performs the role of the Aligner.



Photo by: Row2K

The **Judge at Start:** The Judge at Start signals that the crews are aligned by raising a white flag. The starting sequence passes to the Starter when the Judge at Start raises the white flag. If alignment is lost, the Judge at Start lowers the white flag and the alignment process begins again. Should the Starter not notice that the white flag has been lowered, the Judge at Start may raise a red flag to gain the Starter's attention.

**Starting the Race:** When the Judge at Start is satisfied that alignment has been achieved and that the crews are ready to race, the Starter may use one of the starting procedures discussed in the Coaches' and Coxswains' meeting. There are three traditional fixed starts, i.e., where a starting platform or stake boats are used:

*Polled Start.* This is the standard start. Beginning with Lane 1, the Starter announces the name of each crew, e.g.: "Oregon; California; UCLA..." with a slight pause between each crew's name. For single scullers, the last name is used. A crew or rower ready to race need not acknowledge; a crew or rower *not* ready to row must signify so by raising a hand. For coxed boats, the bow person should raise his or her hand. For single scullers, a vigorous shake of the head is sufficient.

Once the polling sequence is completed and if there are no hands in the air, the Starter begins the starting command.

Should alignment be lost during polling, the starting sequence is terminated. If the delay in regaining alignment is slight, it is not necessary to re-poll. If the delay has been substantial, polling may be repeated.

*Quick Start.* Unlike the Polled Start, crews' names are not announced. If the Starter elects to change from a polled start to a quick start, the Starter should announce: "*Quick Start.*" This provides the crews with notice that the starting procedures have changed. When alignment is achieved and all hands are down, the Starter proceeds with the starting command.



Photo by: SportsGraphics

*Countdown Start.* This start is unique in that the Starter is not obligated to acknowledge raised hands. The countdown start is used when current, wind conditions, or inexperienced crews prevent using either the polled start or quick start. The crews have an equal and fair opportunity during the countdown to prepare. The Starter announces the decision to employ the Countdown Start ("*Countdown Start*"), and may remind rowers that hands may not be recognized. The Starter counts down in a regular cadence: "Five . . . four . . . three . . . two . . . one . . ." and begins the starting command. The Starter should use his or her best judgment and may suspend the countdown if starting the crews would be unsafe (e.g., the shells are not pointed in a safe manner). Do not insert excess words into a Countdown start; the purpose of this start is to avoid delay.

With inexperienced crews, it is good practice to demonstrate the cadence of the countdown once before beginning the starting sequence.

**The Starting Command with Flags:** The Starter begins the starting command by (1) announcing "*Attention,*" (2) raising the red flag overhead, preferably with two hands, and (3) after a distinct and variable pause, announces: "*Go.*" The red flag is snapped sharply in a large arc to the Starter's side at precisely the same instant that "*Go*" is announced. The red flag is slowly withdrawn from view as the boats leave the starting line.

The pause should be distinct and sufficiently long to allow the flag to become stationary, so that rowers can locate and focus upon it. It is important to vary the length of the pause from one start to another; it prevents any crew from anticipating the start command so that all crews react to the same signal. However, the pause should not be so extended as to increase the tension and anxiety of the rowers poised for the start.

Voice control at the start is important. With today's megaphones and public-address systems, it is seldom necessary to shout. The exception is when, as Starter, you need to stop or initiate some action in an emergency, or when you must issue the starting commands in a strong wind or with competing noise. Whenever possible, the starting commands should be issued in an even, conversational voice.

If, after the red flag is raised, you as Starter believe that the start should not occur, announce in an even, calm voice: "*As you were,*" and slowly lower the red flag. (Avoid using the command, "*Hold,*" which may be confused with the command, "*Go!*") The starting sequence begins again at an appropriate point.



Photo by: SportsGraphics



Photo by: Row2K

**The Starting Command with Lights:** In some venues, you may encounter a light system used to start races instead of the traditional flags; these systems are reminiscent of stoplights.

For a Light system, the Starter begins the starting command by (1) announcing “*Attention*,” (2) the Starter presses a button/switch to change the traffic lights from unlit/black to red, and (3) after a distinct pause, the Starter gives the starting command by depressing a button that at the same moment changes the red light to green and makes an audible sound through a loudspeaker. If the red light has been illuminated and the Starter believes for any reason that the Start should not occur, he/she will call “*As you were*” and change the light from red to unlit/neutral. Using this system, the crews may leave when the light turns green.

**REMINDER:**

**Polled Start** - hands are recognized  
**Quick Start** - hands are recognized  
**Countdown Start** - hands may not be recognized

Crews may leave the starting line **when the red flag begins to move or as soon as the light turns green**. This is the moment when the Referee begins timing the race and moves on to the course to assume responsibility for following the race.

**False Starts:** A crew commits a false start when the bow crosses the plane of the starting line before the Starter’s red flag begins to move. In the event of a false start, the Judge at Start raises a red flag. The Starter and Referee(s) stop the race by sounding a bell or horn, waving red flags, and giving the command, “*Stop!*”

The Judge at Start is the **sole** judge of whether a crew has left the starting line early. The Judge at Start informs the Starter which crew(s) left early.

The Starter instructs the crews to return to the starting line. When the crews have returned, the Starter announces the crew or crews that committed the false start and may penalize the crew(s) with a Warning (i.e., “*Dartmouth; Warning, false start*”). The alignment and starting sequence begins again. In the event that more than one crew leaves early, the Judge at Start may excuse from penalty any crew that he or she judges was “drawn off” by the offending crew(s).

**If a Crew Fails to Start:** When one or more crews fail to leave the starting line, the Starter stops the race by sounding a bell or horn, waving the red flag, and giving the command: “*Stop!*” If the crew’s failure to start is not justified, a penalty may be assessed. In addition, any official in the starting area may stop a race if that official observes a crew signaling that they are not ready.

**Floating Start:** In the absence of an anchored starting facility (or where the combination of wind and water conditions and inexperienced crews exists), a floating start is used. Crews align themselves (under the direction of the Aligner) without the benefit of a starting platform or stake boat. When possible, a Marshal should help to position the crews in their assigned lanes and bring them slowly to the starting line. It is preferable to have the Aligner stationed at the side of the course and to have the Starter stationed 30 to 40 meters behind the crews. The important thing is to be back sufficiently far that all crews can be addressed without the Starter having to “sweep” or “pan” the megaphone. In still water, still air, and with experienced crews, good alignment can be attained. The longer the alignment process continues, however, the less likely that that alignment will be achieved or retained.

When a current is strong or there is a gusty breeze or crosswind, a well-aligned start from a dead stop is nearly impossible. (To even attempt it is simply to frustrate and fatigue the competitors.) Under such conditions, the Marshal, Starter, and Referee(s) should arrange the crews in their lanes approximately even with each other and bring them—at a gentle paddle—to the Aligner.

Alignment instructions must be responded to immediately if decent alignment is to be achieved. Therefore, the Aligner should directly (i.e., without the coxswain acting as intermediary) address the bow pair. Instructions should be short, in terms that the rowers can easily understand, and of the form: **Crew’s name, Crew members requested to take action, Action requested**, e.g., “*Temple, bow pair, take one stroke; Georgetown, let it run; Northeastern, all hold.*”

With scullers, who are accustomed to using very slight blade movements to adjust the position of their shell, instructions such as: “*Smith, tap it lightly,*” can be very helpful.

Once again, alignment instructions should be given to multiple crews at the same time; do not wait for one crew to react before instructing another crew. Once alignment is achieved, the Aligner/Judge at Start raises the white flag and the Starter immediately begins a Quick Start.

Floating starts are challenging and sometimes frustrating. Competent Aligners learn to keep track of each shell and where it is in the process—and keep a flow of instructions going to all crews so that no crew must be kept waiting (and losing position) while the others are brought into alignment. The prudent Aligner will not insist on perfection in alignment but rather will work to quickly bring all crews approximately even. Remember that in a prolonged alignment process, rowers will cool down, which in turn increases the potential for injury. The degree of approximation is largely a function of the prevailing conditions.

**Rowing Start:** When a current is strong or there is a gusty breeze or crosswind, bring crews to a standstill for alignment may not be possible or safe. Under these conditions, Marshal, Starter, and Referee(s) may choose to conduct a Rowing Start. The Marshal or Starter should instruct the crews that they will be conducting a Rowing start and that they will be brought on a paddle to the race course, and that once all crews are aligned the starter will give the Quick Start commands. The Marshal should arrange the crews in their lanes and have them advance on to the race course at a gentle paddle. The Marshal should ensure that all crews are in their lanes and remind the coxswains to keep their points as needed. The Aligner should be positioned off to the side in a launch and give instructions to crews regarding pressure, for example, “Georgetown, half pressure” in order to align the bows as near as possible. When the crews are in alignment, the Starter will issue the starting commands.

**Start Line Management:** Performing starts smoothly and calmly is only part of a Starter's responsibilities. The rest of the Starter's duties fall into the housekeeping category—keeping the start line area functioning smoothly.

*Pre-race Use of Lanes.* Although the five-minute announcement is traditionally the signal to crews that the starting process is beginning, there is little harm in allowing crews to enter their lanes as soon as the previous race is well under way. Experienced crews may use the time to make a last practice start; inexperienced crews may need the extra time to maneuver their shells into the starting platform.

The first rule of thumb is to check the progress of the previously started race beyond the breakage zone. Next, provided the race in progress seems to be moving smoothly and no debris-removal or other housekeeping chores are necessary, crews may be invited to enter their lanes. It is important to stress, in the invitation, that each crew is to move into, and remain in, its assigned lane near the start line. This allows you as Starter to better control any "interactions" between crews as they shift from the Marshal's jurisdiction to yours.

*Communications.* It is imperative for the Starter or Assistant Starter to check with the Chief Judge before starting the first race to ensure that the finish line is ready. The Starter and the Chief Judge at finish should establish what level of communications they wish to maintain. Some Chief Judges like to be notified by radio when a race is underway and has safely passed the Breakage Zone. A simple “*Event 14 is on the course*” will suffice. This will alert other regatta traffic on the course that a race is approaching. However, many Chief Judges only wish to be notified of any special or unusual circumstances, e.g., a crew with an incorrect bow marker; a lane change, a change in the order of races, a late “scratch,” etc. There are a variety of considerations that may influence one choice over another. For example, the advent of remote electronic timing equipment increases the management duties at both the start and the finishline and may require additional (or less frequent) communication.

*Talking to Crews.* The time just before the start of a race is a time of tension and anxiety for the rowers. The first rule as Starter is: **Do not increase the tension.** How much you, as Starter, talk to the crews depends first on the experience level of the rowers and second on the conditions at the start. Elite and varsity crews are sufficiently experienced that little communication beyond making the five-minute and subsequent time announcements, polling, and the starting commands is necessary.

In dealing with less experienced crews, more communication may be necessary to help crews lock on and hold their point during alignment. Starters of novice races often refer to their duty as “Stake boats 101.” Novice crews may require some instruction regarding how to maintain their point, especially when gusting or crossing breezes occur at the starting line. However, the prudent Starter will be sure that he or she **knows** what to do before jumping in to help. Depending on the starting area infrastructure, it may be better to direct a referee in a launch to provide the crews with instructions. If you are located in a stationary start tower, anchored several meters behind the starting platform, boat handling instructions coming through the PA system are less effectual than those received from a referee in a launch located alongside the crew.

*Controlling the Race.* Provided that there is no false start or failure to start by a crew, the control of the race passes from the Starter to the following Referee(s) once they are in position. However, because of several factors, including the arrangement of the stake platform, the Referees may not be in position for several strokes. As Starter, you may have to address one or more crews almost immediately after the start. Because you may not have time to jettison the red flag and take up the white flag, any commands you give are best done by voice, e.g.: “*Wisconsin, correct your point; BRC, Vesper, keep apart.*”

Commands to crews in a race are covered in more detail in the next chapter. The important thing to remember is that the Starter's responsibilities do not end with the utterance of the starting commands. However, as soon as Referees are in position, you must relinquish control of the race. Crews engaged in the start of a race cannot respond to more than once set of instructions. Let the Referees closest to the crews provide those instructions. Once control of the race is assumed by the Referee(s), record the time of the start, the name(s) of the following Referee(s), and any warnings or other issues.

*Assessing Penalties.* The Starter assesses any penalties arising from infractions in the warm-up area or those that occur in the starting area (the area between the starting line and the end of the breakage zone). The *Rules* allow some discretion as to the severity of the penalty. Any penalties assessed should be announced with the minimum of verbiage (see example above, under “False Starts”). In addition to announcing penalties assessed in the starting area, it may be necessary to announce penalties assessed by other Referees prior to arriving at the start; i.e., traffic pattern violations, unsportsmanlike conduct on the way to the start or on land. These penalties will be

communicated to the Starter. It is customary for a crew or rower to acknowledge the penalty with a nod or a wave of the hand; you, as Starter, may ask for an acknowledgment if there is any doubt that the crew understands the announcement.

As with other communications at the starting line, the “*less is more*” principle applies. However, when dealing with novice crews, it is good practice to briefly explain the possible consequences of the penalty, e.g.: “*Iowa, warning. False start. A second warning will result in exclusion from this event.*”

## 7. REFEREE - AT THE START

The actions of the Starter, the Judge at Start, the Chief Judge, and Place Judges follow defined and sequenced procedures. The Referee following a race, however, has few firmly set procedures except for (a) the first moments of the race, and (b) actions to complete a race. The Referee must make instant decisions and be aware of constantly changing situations.

In the following discussion, Referees may be referred to as "Primary" or "Secondary." Primary denotes the Referee who will report the time and declare the race official (or otherwise—see “Protests,” below). Typically, the Primary Referee will begin the race on the left side of the racecourse—the side beginning with Lane 1. In regattas where two Referees may begin the race but only one follows it to the finish line, the Primary Referee stays with the race.

It is important to remember that the terms "Primary" and "Secondary" *have no relevance* in terms of responsibility or authority during the coverage of the body of the race. Referees are equally responsible for the safety of all crews and for ensuring fairness; each Referee is responsible for making correct judgments and decisions as the circumstances that develop during the race dictate.

**Before the Start:** Because it is a rare luxury to have a third person in your launch as a Timer, you may want to give your driver a spare stopwatch to time the races.

Give instructions to the launch driver regarding where (in which lane or lanes) you want the launch to enter the course. Ask your launch driver to position the launch where it does not interfere with the starting sequence or the rowers’ view of the Starter but can quickly move into the desired following positions after the start. Stand up in the launch to demonstrate to the Starter and other Referees in the area that you are ready to follow the race.



Photo by: Row2K

**The Start:** Start stopwatches at the moment the Starter’s red flag begins to move or the green light appears. Do not wait until you hear the word “*Go!*”

Watch the actions of the Judge at Start and the crews. Sound a noise maker, raise the red flag, and command the crews to stop rowing: “*Stop!*” if the Judge at Start raises a red flag, if a crew fails to leave the starting line, or if a crew stops rowing within the breakage zone and a member of the crew raises a hand. Once all crews have stopped, the race returns to the control of the Starter. It is imperative that you ensure that the other Referee on the race has not stopped the race; eye contact with your partner Referee even during the beginning moments of a race are key.

If the Judge at Start keeps the white flag up and all crews leave the breakage zone, it is a fair start. The driver should move the launch rapidly onto the course so that you can assume control of the race. If you are particularly tall or heavy and in a small launch, squat down momentarily while your launch accelerates and turns at the start. This makes the launch more stable and easier to control. Most referees hold on to a painter (a short rope) attached to the hull of the launch for stability.

**Control of the Race:** For a six-lane race with two Referees, the Primary Referee usually moves to a following position straddling lanes 2 and 3 and the Secondary Referee moves into a following position straddling lanes 4 and 5.

**Breakage Rule:** Stop the race if a crew stops rowing and raises hands in the first 100 meters of a marked course or in the first 20 seconds of an unmarked course. Sound a horn or bell, slowly wave the red flag, and give the command, “*Stop!*” Typically, it requires more than one such command to stop all crews.

As Referee, you determine if breakage actually occurred. The following conditions are *not* considered broken equipment: crabs, jumped slides, broken Cox Boxes, stroke watches, or stopwatches. If there is broken equipment, determine how serious the problem is and notify the Starter, so that he or she can decide whether to delay or reschedule the race. If you determine that there was not broken equipment, the crew may be assessed a penalty. Notify the Starter. If there is doubt about whether the breakage occurred within the breakage zone, the benefit of the doubt should go to the crew.

**Other Reasons for Stopping the Race:** The starting area is sometimes an area of confusion and turmoil immediately after the starting commands have been given. Crews may stop rowing for any number of reasons; clashes of oars or minor collisions may occur before any official has the opportunity to affect control. It is good practice to stop the race, get things sorted out before communicating to the Starter any recommendations you may have regarding penalties. Remember, the ‘benefit of the doubt’ as to why a crew has stopped during this time should always go to the crew and the race stopped.

## 8. REFEREE – BODY OF THE RACE

For the Referee, the body of the race begins at the moment of the start and ends when the last competitor crosses the finish line. The Referee's primary duty is safety of the crews. This duty supersedes all other responsibilities. During the body of the race, the Referee's second responsibility is to ensure that all competitors have a fair chance to compete. Good judgment and maintaining constant awareness takes practice. The best place to learn about following a race is to follow races under the tutelage of experienced Referees. The next best way to gain experience is to attend USRowing Referee Clinics; they present a variety of difficult and unusual situations and discuss potential solutions.

**Referee's Commands:** The following sections discuss commands that may be used during the body of the race.

*Directing a Crew to Alter Course.* If a crew leaves its lane and is about to interfere with another boat (which may include washing-the puddles/wake left by a crew's shell and oars), the Referee directs the offending crew to change its course. The Referee raises the white flag vertically aloft, calls the offending crew by name ("*Purdue!*"), and crisply drops the white flag in the direction the crew should steer. The flag should slowly move through an arc to the horizontal position, where it is held so that it is in plain view. It is important to make the flag movement as deliberate as conditions will permit—rapid, frenzied movements of the flag may confuse the crew you wish to direct, or the crew may miss the movement completely. Try to use your corresponding arm for each direction, that is, use your left arm when directing a crew left and your right arm for right. Crossing your arm in front of your body can be confusing to a crew and may not provide the crew with a sufficiently clear indication of the action your desire.

*Keeping Apart.* If two crews begin to edge toward one another and are about to overlap oars along the buoy line, the Referee should first move the launch up along the buoy line. The presence of the Referee's launch has a natural tendency to separate the crews. If that doesn't work, the Referee raises the white flag vertically, calls both crews by name, "*Marietta, UCF!*" and commands, "*Keep apart!*"



Photo by: Row2K

*Stopping a Crew.* If a crew is about to collide with another crew or an obstacle, the Referee raises the white flag, names the offending crew and gives the command to stop ("*California, Stop!*"). When the potential for collision is past, the Referee raises the white flag, names the crew, and commands them to continue ("*California, Continue rowing.*") while dropping the flag in the direction of the finish line. To prevent a collision, the Referee may be forced to command the offended crew to stop as well.

*Stopping a Race.* Situations may occur in which the wisest course is to stop the race. Such situations usually involve serious collisions, unsafe conditions on the course (e.g., high winds, lightning), or circumstances that clearly and seriously disadvantage some of the competing crews. The procedure is the same as given above for false starts and breakage. It may be necessary to sound the noisemaker and issue the "*Stop!*" command several times. When all crews have stopped, (1) in the case of unsafe conditions, direct them to a place of safety or the launching area; or (2) notify the Starter who will decide when the race may be re-started and communicate that decision to all crews.

*Obstacles.* If a crew is heading toward a previously known obstacle, the Referee calls the crew by name and declares an obstacle ("*Texas, obstacle!*"). If the crew is about to collide with the known obstacle, stop the crew as described above. If the obstacle is not previously known (e.g., floating debris or a recreational boater who has ventured onto the course) the Referee may instruct the crew to alter course to avoid the obstacle. If the crew is about to collide with the unknown obstacle, stop the crew as described above.

Keep in mind that although LOCs may obtain permits to operate regattas on navigable waters and try to preventor control non-regatta traffic, odd situations (e.g., a sailboat suddenly drifting out into Lane 5) *do* occur. If there is time to do so (and it can be done without putting any crew at a disadvantage), you should guide the crews around and past the problem—this is the only time when it is permissible to "steer" the crews. If there is any question about the ability of the crews to respond effectively or that one or more crews may be disadvantaged, the prudent Referee will stop the race (as described above under "Stopping the Race.").



Photo by: Row2K

**Launch Position:** Generally, how close you as Referee follow the crews will depend on the circumstances of the race, the racecourse conditions, and on your own comfort level. Finding that "perfect distance" in which you can quickly react to solve problems yet not interfere is part of the art of refereeing that you will develop with practice. The expectation is that you as a Referee will always be in a position to properly judge the relative lane alignment and course heading of the crews—close enough to effectively communicate with a crew when necessary—without unnecessarily disturbing any of the crews while they race.

The general tendency of a new Referee is to follow too far back. Although this might allow a panoramic view of the race, it means that you are not in position to quickly communicate with crews. Moreover, the need to zoom forward at high speed causes unnecessary water disturbance and noise which can be unsettling to those crews not involved in the problem that you are trying to solve.

Another tendency of inexperienced Referees is to follow too closely. Doing so is bad practice because: (1) you may distract or intimidate the crews closest to you and (2) you and the nearby crews will be put in a dangerous situation should the shell in front of you suddenly veer sharply, slow down, or stop. Remember that with modern megaphones, it is seldom necessary to “be sitting on the coxswains shoulder.”

Maneuver to a position where you can watch the entire race and react to any potential problem (remember, *all* crews are your responsibility, even if you have a partner Referee in the race). In most cases, this means following along inconspicuously but in a position to react quickly if a problem arises. Don’t enter among racing crews needlessly. The Referee may not “steer” crews except to avoid obstacles. Crews without a coxswain may try to use the Referee’s launch as a steering guide; this can give the crews nearest the Referee an unfair advantage. Place the launch in a “neutral” position, between lanes or as close as possible to the buoy line.

If the race is a heat with one or more crew to advance, your responsibility is to ensure that the leading or “competitive” boats have a fair race. This may mean that you may be forced to pass and even wash the non-competitive crews. If you must wash a crew, inform the crew—and a short apology at the end of the race is usually appreciated.

Eye contact between the two Referee launches is essential. You should always know where your partner is and with what situation he/she is confronted. You may have to pitch in to help; you may have to assume control of the entire race. When things start happening fast, you will not be able to depend on standard radio communications to know what is happening. Body language and hand signals are essential communication tools with your partner Referee.



Photo by: Row2K

**Rescues:** Should a crew have a member fall overboard, swamp a boat, or have an injury or medical problem, the Referee’s primary duty is for the safety of the crew. It is not always necessary to stop the race; in some cases, attempting to stop the race may waste time better spent in helping the rower(s). One Referee may continue to follow while the other gives assistance to the boat in trouble.

If you are nearest to the rower in a “man-overboard” situation, let the other Referee follow the race. Direct your driver to approach the crewmember to the windward side, kill the engine, and drift gently toward the person in the water. Haul the person into the boat, wrap him or her in a space blanket, and quickly proceed to first aid. Don’t toss the person a life buoy or seat-cushion unless the person is in imminent danger of drowning—it just gets in the way. Do not go into the water after the rower unless it is absolutely necessary. Once in the water, unless you are a certified lifeguard, you no longer are in control.



Photo by: Row2K

If you need to approach a shell to make repairs, to give something to a member of the crew, or to assist a rower out of a shell, you should drift into the center of the shell slowly with your engine off. Never approach under power. Use a paddle instead. Ask the rowers to position their oars so that the launch can approach.

If a boat swamps, direct the crew to stay with the boat. Call for additional safety launches. Have the coxswain “count down” the shell to ensure that athletes are accounted for and are attentive. Ask the coxswain to direct the rowers to slip into the water, one at a time from opposite sides starting from the middle of the shell toward the ends, and tell the rowers to hold onto their riggers. Stop your motor and retrieve members of the crew one at a time over the stern—don’t overload your launch. As additional safety launches arrive, direct them to retrieve the crew in the same manner. Retrieving the swamped boat is not your responsibility; your responsibility is the safety of the crew. Leave the retrieval of the boat to the LOC.

## 9. REFEREE – AT THE FINISH

As the Referees approach the finish line, they must keep a close watch on all boats. Collisions are common in the last 100 meters of the race when crews are sprinting and nearing exhaustion. In their excited and fatigued state, crews are less responsive to Referees' instructions or commands.

You and your timer, if you have one, should look for the orange flag at the finish line. When it snaps down for the first time, the watches are stopped. Remember that a safe, fair race is more important than an accurate time. Slow down and allow all crews a clear view of the other competing crews.

Do not cross the finish line until all crews have finished the race unless necessitated by a medical emergency. After the last crew has finished, check with your partner Referee. If the race was fair (as far as the two of you are concerned), the secondary Referee should signal so by giving a brief nod of the head or a discrete “thumbs up.” Referees should not use the white flag to signal between themselves. If you see no raised hands, display a white flag first to the crews, then to the Chief Judge and announce the first-place time. It is good practice to move reasonably close to the Judges' stand when announcing the time. The Chief Judge will acknowledge your announcement, usually by showing a white flag. Another good practice is to write your observed time on your race program, together with any notes regarding the conduct of the race or the outcome of protest discussions (see below).

Time is announced in a clear voice, by digit. As with all communications, less is more. Unless you have been instructed otherwise (e.g., at the pre-regatta meeting), round times to the nearest 0.1 second. A first place time of 5:18.62 is announced: “*Time: Five one eight point six.*” No further commentary is needed. If the finish line needs the time repeated or needs further information, the Chief Judge will make that request. If there is additional information that you need to communicate to the Chief Judge, do so by closely approaching the finish line stand or using the radio.

There may come a time when you forget to start your watch at the start, or somehow during the course of the race, your watch stops. If you have a race partner, after the end of the race, quietly motor over or use your radio to ask if he or she managed to get the time. If so, have your partner make the announcement.

In the event that your partner suffered a similar lapse of stopwatch ability as you and neither one of you has the time; you must drive up to the finish line and announce: “No Time.” No explanation is necessary.

Modern technology has made electronic timing systems more affordable. Many LOCs for national regattas use timing systems that enable them to start a timer when the race starts and record the finish all from a single computer system. These provide yet another level of measurement for accurate race times. Such systems are not a replacement for the time taken by the Referees following the race; therefore, *always* time your races, even when newer timing systems are present. Like all systems that involve human interaction with technology, even the most sophisticated system can fail.

When electronic systems are used, you may be asked to transmit your time to the Chief Judge over a radio rather than through a megaphone. The techniques described above for announcing times through a megaphone apply to radio transmissions as well: ***Less is More.***

**Protests:** A crew or rower with a raised hand at the finish means one of three things—injury or illness in the boat, the crew has a question, or the crew wishes to protest some action or the result of the race. Injuries or illness should be handled according to the arrangements established by the LOC. Questions should be answered briefly and courteously.

There are three basic rules that govern how a Referee handles protests. These are:

1. A crew is entitled to protest any action (or lack thereof) during the race that they believe deprived them of a fair chance to compete;
  - a. protests concerning the start **MUST** be lodged at the start of the race.
2. If you concur in their assessment, you must take the appropriate action to restore fairness while all crews are still in the finish area
3. If you decide that you cannot concur with the protesting crew and one or more crews do not concur in your decision, the protest moves to the next stage—the Jury. In that event, you must inform the crew of its rights and what it must do in order to continue the protest.



Photo by: Row2K

Very important: you cannot deny the protest—you can only disagree with it.

The atmosphere surrounding a protest may be highly charged. If the crew believes that they were mistreated, they are likely to be upset about it. You must first try to reduce the temperature of the discussion to some level of calm. One way to do this is to ask, upon approaching the crew, if everyone is all right.

*Hearing and acting on the protest.* Before hearing the protest, ensure that all crews for the race have been moved safely off the finishline so as not to interfere with the next race. After approaching the crew, make it clear that you will listen to only one person—the coxswain, or in a non-coxed boat, the stroke or **one** spokesperson. Ask the spokesperson what the nature of the protest is and what his or her desired outcome would be. Ask whatever questions you need in order to clarify the issue (e.g., where the problem occurred, if another crew was involved, which one (or ones), etc.). Be brief and to the point—this should not be a cross-examination but rather simple information gathering. Be mindful of your body language and the imposing image that you may inadvertently project to the crew and coxswain. Speak without the megaphone. Be aware that the athletes are sitting at water level and if you are standing in your launch, have to crane their heads back to see you. If you can safely do so, sit down in your launch and make eye contact with the coxswain and **listen** actively to what is said. Make sure the athletes know that they have your complete attention. This will often diffuse further tensions.

Make your decision and inform the crew. The *Rules of Rowing* provide the range of remedies available to you. If you **do** agree with the offended crew and apply a remedy that may affect one or more of the other crews in that race, you must inform **those crews** of your proposed action as well. They have the option of protesting your decision. If you have resolved the protest to everyone's satisfaction, approach the Judges' stand, raise the red flag, lower it and raise the white flag. Briefly describe the protest and the resolution, raise the white flag, and announce the winning time, e.g., "*Dartmouth was impeded by Harvard. Harvard shall be placed behind Dartmouth. Time: six three eight point five.*" The Chief Judge or Chief Referee may ask you to explain in greater detail. Once again, remember that the radio is not a secure form of communication. Keep any explanation over a radio to a minimum.

*Disagreeing with the protest.* If upon brief reflection you cannot agree with the crew's protest, politely indicate this and explain why. Follow this with a statement similar to: "*You have the right to continue your protest. If you wish to do so, I must know this now, so that I can inform the finish line.*" Then continue with instructions on filing the protest on shore. These will vary somewhat with the regatta, but always involve a written protest (written by one of the offended crew, usually the coxswain—**not** the coach); the time limit for lodging the protest (one hour after reaching shore); and identifying to whom the written protest must be delivered. Although these details usually are covered in the Coaches' and Coxswains' meeting, the prudent Referee will remind the crew of them. If the crew decides to continue the protest, approach the Judges' stand and raise the red flag to signify that the race results are being protested. Provide the winning time to the Chief Judge—who may ask you to briefly outline the nature of the protest.

*Protesting the unprotestable.* Certain items within the *Rules of Rowing* are not subject to protest. For example, once a crew leaves the starting area, the crew cannot lodge a protest on the start; the proper action would have been for the crew not to begin the race. In addition, a crew may protest interference when they were, in fact, out of their water and not subject to protection by the Referee. The best reaction to protests such as these is to clearly explain to the crew the *Rules of Rowing*, citing the rule where possible. Approach this situation as an opportunity to provide instruction, and explain to the crew what rules affect the outcome and why the Rules of Rowing do not support its protest. The crew may continue its protest if they desire; follow the procedures above should this occur.

**Penalties:** It is incumbent on officials to maintain order during the conduct of the regatta. Most often, this can be done by being courteous, impartially helpful, and approachable. There are times, however, when it is necessary to apply some level of discipline or to restore fairness. Penalties may be issued for infractions of rules (e.g., interference, false starts); procedures (e.g., violation of a traffic pattern); or behavior (e.g., unsportsmanlike actions). As a Referee, you must restore fairness—which may involve imposing a penalty—even in the absence of a protest.

## THE RULES OF ROWING SET OUT FOUR LEVELS OF PENALTIES.

- *Reprimand.* This is the least punitive penalty. It carries no real effect other than to place the offending crew or rower on notice. It is most commonly employed in very minor violations of, for example, traffic patterns, rowing uniform or advertising regulations, and other things of a "housekeeping" nature. It is an effective device in dealing with "first offense" violations by novice crews.

- *Warning.* This is the most common penalty that carries consequences. In any given race, a crew or rower is allowed **one** warning; assessment of a second warning carries an automatic exclusion from the event. Warnings are most commonly assessed for serious violations of traffic patterns, false starts, interference, and being late to the starting line, but are available for other infractions at the official's discretion. A warning expires after the race in which it is applied has been successfully completed. However, in the case of a re-row, any warnings carry over from the original race.

- *Exclusion.* This removes a crew or rower from competition in the race in which it is assessed. In effect, it removes the crew/rower from that event. The crew/rower remains eligible to race in other events. Exclusion is automatically assessed if two warnings are accumulated within one race. It may be assessed for repeated, blatant, or dangerous violations of procedures or for unsportsmanlike behavior that does not merit disqualification. It may be assessed for interference during a race and is one of the remedies for resolving a protest or restoring fairness at the end of a race.

- *Disqualification.* This is the most serious penalty and the only one that carries possible consequences beyond an individual race, event, or regatta. Disqualification removes a crew or rower from the **regatta**. It is reserved for the most flagrant violations; when it is employed, it is usually for flagrant or repeated instances of unsportsmanlike behavior. All cases of disqualification must be reported in writing to the Referee Committee.

## 10. FINISH LINE OPERATIONS

The most important function of finish line Judges is to *establish the order of finish* for each race. To that end, two basic procedures are available to the Chief Judge and Judges—often referred to as "Place Judges." These will be described in detail below.

The Finish Line is an imaginary line created across the racecourse by aligning the sight line (a taut vertical wire) on the near shore with a vertical marker on the far shore. Finish lines often are marked by a string of buoys beyond the end of a course, but the official Finish Line is the plane produced by sighting across the course from the Judges' stand. At most regattas, a video camera or other recording system is set up and aligned with the finish line to provide a rapid replay of the finish of the race in order to resolve very close finishes or verify the identification of crews.

Irrespective of which finish line procedure is used, the finish line crew typically comprises a Chief Judge, Judges, and a Flag Person. At large regattas, a video-camera operator and clerks to handle the record keeping may be provided.

**The Chief Judge.** The Chief Judge is responsible for organizing and supervising finish line operations. The Chief Judge calls the place finish; is the final authority on the order of finish; and by signing the race card, signifies that a race is official.

**Pre-Race Activities:** The Chief Judge often has much work to do before the finish line can accept the first race of the day. As soon as the Chief Judge reaches the finish line, he or she should establish contact with the Starter. The Starter should never start the first race without determining if the finish line is ready. If the Chief Judge believes that the finish line is not ready for the start of the first race, the Starter should be informed. The Chief

Judge should:

- Provide forms, race schedules, and pencils to the Judges.
- Instruct everyone at the finish line on how the finishes will be conducted.
- Point out the target on the opposite shore.
- Show the flag person how to make crisp flag movements.
- Conduct a practice "dry-run" finish to ensure that everyone understands the procedures, can properly operate and read their stopwatches, and can accurately compute results. This is especially important if some or all of the Judges are volunteers, i.e., not licensed referees. Even with licensed referees, it is good practice to thoroughly review the procedures that will be used.
- Verify the alignment and power supply of the video finish line camera. The prudent Chief Judge will check the video camera before each race.
- Verify that the finish line area is "secure." The area should be marked off or physically separated so that spectators, athletes, or other nonessential persons do not interrupt finish line operations and discussions.
- If the finish line crew is unfamiliar with the uniforms and blade designs of the competitors, ask for a person familiar with the crews to act as spotter.

**Finish Line Procedure 1:** This method reflects the advent of stopwatches that can store several intervals or splits. It was developed to contend with those situations in which it is not possible to fully staff a finish line with Judges for each place.

Two Judges are made responsible for determining and recording the order of finish (Place Judges). Another one or two Judges (Timers or Timing Judges) are responsible for determining and recording intervals or splits. The Place Judges sit one behind another in direct line with the finish line. The Chief Judge sits or stands behind the Place Judges so that all Judges have a clear view of the oncoming race and the finish line. The Timing Judges sit close to the Chief Judge so that they can hear the Chief Judge call the finish (see below). It is preferable but not necessary that Timing Judges be located directly on the finish line.

*Calling the Finish.* As soon as it is known that a race is on the course, the Chief Judge begins to ready the finish line by announcing the race, e.g., "Race on the Course. Event 7, Women's Junior Four." At this time, the Chief Judge alerts the Judges to any scratches, late entries, missing or incorrect bow numbers, etc.

- As the boats approach the finish line (approximately 750 meters to go) the Chief Judge verifies that all Judges are in their positions.
- When the first boat reaches approximately 250 meters to go, the Chief Judge directs that the flag be raised, "Flag Up!"
- The Chief Judge reminds Judges to clear their watches.
- As the first boat approaches the line, The Chief Judge announces, "Eyes on the Line." It is good practice that if a race appears to be very close, to alert the Judges to the circumstances.
- As each bow ball touches the line, the Chief Judge calls the place finish, "One! . . . Two! Three! Four! . . . . Five! . . .Six!"
- The Chief Judge or a designee sounds a horn or signal device as each bow ball touches the line.



Photo by: Row2K

*The Flag Person.* On the “Flag up” command from the Chief Judge, the flag person raises a large, orange flag so that the Referee(s) following the race can clearly see the flag and where the flag does not obstruct the Judges’ view of the finish line.

On the command, “One!” (or the first sound of the noise maker) from the Chief Judge, the flag person snaps the flag down smartly. The flag person snaps the flag alternately up and down with each successive place finish. The Referees on the water are looking for the first downward movement of the flag to stop their watches.



Photo by: Row2K

*Recording the Order of Finish.* At the end of the race, the Place Judges confer to see if there is any disagreement; if so, the Chief Judge—aided if necessary by videotape replays—makes the final decision. Similarly, the Timing Judges confer to determine which set of splits is likely to be the more dependable. The results card/form is filled out with the appropriate calculations of finishing times for each crew and signed by the Chief Judge.

In recording the order of finish, the first “target” is the bow number of each shell as its bowball touches the finish line. In close finishes or when bow numbers may be unreadable (or missing), the Place Judge should note the color of the shell, uniforms, or blades, or the position of the shells

relative to the Judge (i.e., “near” vs. “far”). In close finishes the Chief Judge can help by calling the same “near-far” (or vice versa) relationship instead of the number as the shells cross the line.

The finish time for the winning crew as given by the Referee is recorded on the finish line form. The time for each other crew is determined by adding the interval or split for that crew to the first-place time. In calculating finishing times, remember that there are 60 seconds in a minute (not 100) but that fractions of a second are expressed in decimals (e.g., tenths). Calculations require practice and constant vigilance.

Once the Chief Judge is satisfied with the order of finish and the calculated times—and provided that there is no protest—the results are declared official, the Chief Judge signs the form, and the results may be released to the finish line clerk or announcer. If the race is under protest (i.e., the Referee has displayed the red flag), the results may not be released to anyone except the President of the Jury until after the protest has been withdrawn or resolved.

In the event of a protest, the Chief Judge should privately discuss the situation with the Referee and take notes.

**Finish Line Procedure 2:** This procedure was the traditional procedure that was developed when stopwatches were not capable of storing results. Thus, there was a need for a Place Judge to identify the crew and record the split time for each place in the race. In this procedure, the Chief Judge operates as above, organizing the finish line in terms of staff and equipment and retaining the roles of calling the place finishes and adjudicating any conflicts in order of finish or calculated times.

This procedure requires a Judges’ stand arranged like a staircase, with one position for each Place Judge and one at the top for the Chief Judge. All Judges take positions directly on the finish line. The Judges for places 2 and above in the order of finish have stopwatches. Because the winning (Place 1) time is determined by the Referee, the Place 1 Judge, who is located at the bottom of the stand, is responsible only for identifying the winning crew. Each successive Judge moving up the staircase is responsible for identifying the crew for that place, (e.g., the second Judge identifies the 2nd-place crew, the third Judge the 3rd-place crew, etc.) and recording the time interval between the passage of the winning crew and his or her placement. The process of judging the finish of a race is essentially as follows.

*First Place Judge.* Because the First Place Judge does not need to operate a stopwatch, most Chief Judges ask the First Place Judge to record the order of finish on the back of their form as a second pair of eyes.

*Recording the Place Finish.* Here is the sequence for observing and recording a place finish (Example for the Third Place Judge):

- Follow the commands of the Chief Judge
- Start your stopwatch when the Chief Judge calls, “One!” or first sounds the noisemaker.
- Note which boat will finish third and stop the watch when that boat’s bow touches the line, the Chief Judge calls, “Three!” and the horn sounds for the third time.
- If the identity of the crew is not immediately obvious (often a problem at small club regattas) keep a continuous eye on the third-place boat, and note the bow number, the lane, the colors of the oars, and other identifying information (make notes on the back of the Finish Line Form if it helps). A set of binoculars is helpful. Ask for assistance in identifying the crew. The Chief Judge may ask the Referee on the water to positively identify the crew.

- Record the time given by the Primary Referee on the Finish Line Form; record the time from the stopwatch on the form; and complete the remaining parts of the form, including adding the Referee's time for the first place boat to the time on your stopwatch.
- When handed the stack of completed Finish Line Forms from the Second Place Judge, place the completed third place Finish Line Form on the bottom of the stack and pass the stack up to the Fourth Place Judge.
- Stay in position until the Chief Judge reviews the forms and resolves any conflicts or errors. Remain seated until all crews have finished so that all judges have an unobstructed view of the entire finish.
- Prepare a Finish Line form for the next event.

Because it may be necessary to discuss aspects of the finish or the races may be on the course with very small intervals, Judges should not leave the finish line area without notifying the Chief Judge. Judges, including volunteers, should not discuss results with spectators that are near the finish line; the results are approved and released by the Chief Judge and should not be discussed outside the finish line until this is done.

In calculating the finishing time for the place that is your responsibility, remember that there are 60 seconds in a minute (not 100) but that fractions of a second are expressed in tenths or hundredths. Calculations require practice and constant vigilance.

**Determining the Official Order of Finish.** The Chief Judge is responsible for accurately placing boats in the order of finish. If you are the Chief Judge, you should:

- Record the order of finish as you observed it.
- Wait for the white flag from the Primary Referee.
- Take the time from the Referee on the water and show a white flag to acknowledge receiving it.
- Upon receiving all of the finish line forms, compare the order of finish to determine any discrepancies and review the computations for errors.
- Adjudicate any conflicts pertaining to order of finish or time. If there is substantial doubt about the order of finish, view the video replay.

In the event of a protest, the same conventions as in Procedure 1 are followed.

**Which Procedure?** Procedure 1, which is the most recent in development, offers certain advantages. It requires fewer people and is more streamlined in terms of decision-making; more important, it separates the functions of determining order of finish and time-keeping—sometimes a source of confusion in Procedure 2. However, as a Chief Judge, you will encounter situations in which well-established regattas have a long tradition of using Procedure 2. In fact, some regattas have a venerable tradition of providing volunteers to staff the Place Judge positions—positions that are highly prized by the volunteers. It therefore behooves the prospective Chief Judge to master both procedures.

**Electronic timing systems.** As electronic timing systems are being developed, these systems occasionally will allow for the order of finish to be determined automatically or with minimal human interaction. These systems can provide valuable support to the finishline referees as well as great benefits to all regatta participants. Regardless of the level of sophistication and technology, race results are reviewed by the Chief Judge before release to ensure accuracy.

## 11. POST-REGATTA ACTIVITIES

This section is a summary of the official activities that occur after the conclusion of the final race. The Chief Referee is largely responsible for conducting these activities.

**Protests:** The Jury completes the administration and adjudication of any protests. The Jury consists of three or five referees; the Chief Referee typically acts as President of the Jury. The procedures for hearing a protest are detailed in the *Rules of Rowing*. Because of the nature of protest hearings, the audience is necessarily limited. However, a limited number of Assistants and other Referees may be permitted to attend as silent observers. Ask the Chief Referee if you can attend a Jury meeting as a protest is resolved.

**Officials' Meeting:** The Chief Referee conducts the post race officials' meeting. There are two purposes for this meeting. The first is to gather observations from the Referees to be forwarded to the LOC. The Chief Referee may meet with the LOC to review the comments or the Chief may send a written report to the LOC. The goal is to provide the LOC with areas of concern that need improvement, as well as acknowledge areas that were well executed. The other purpose for this meeting is to review all interesting situations. The Chief Referee should use these discussions as a training session to hone the judgment skills of the assembled officials. This meeting is not a time to criticize individual officials for bad calls. Generally, every official has the opportunity to speak.

If a Candidate was working with a specific official, it is appropriate to have that official sign the observation form.

If an official did not perform well in some of his or her assignments, the Chief Referee discusses the matter *in private* with the official. The Chief Referee should be direct and specific, identifying the areas needing improvement and the training needed to overcome the problem

**Close Out:** The Chief Referee should meet with the LOC to discuss the following items:

- Problems with any equipment, facilities, volunteers, drivers, logistics, etc.
- Suggestions for improvement next year or the next regatta.
- If this was a USRowing-registered regatta, complete the required forms and reports before leaving the race site. Complete and submit required reports to the USRowing, particularly the Safety Checklist.

## 12. HEAD RACES – The Fall Season

**What is a head race?** Head races are a relatively new form of rowing competition. USRowing and its predecessor organization have conducted sprint race regattas for well over a century. By contrast, the most prominent head race, the Head of the Charles, was first held in Boston in 1965. Only in 1987 did USRowing adopt its first head race rules.

Head races originated in England with the so-called "bumps" races, where crews start at regular intervals. Crews try to catch and "bump" into the crews ahead of them as they overtake each boat, at which point the overtaken crew must yield its position. Then the advancing boat proceeds after the next crew in front of them. Bump races take place over several days with one race each day; at the conclusion of the series of races, the crew that has made it to the front is declared Head of the River.

In the fall, rowing competition switches in emphasis from sprint races to head races. Head racing has grown considerably in popularity in recent years. The longer distances are strenuous events and although once viewed by rowers and coaches as good conditioning and training exercises in preparation for the spring regattas, head racing has become an important season in its own right. Assistant Referees must officiate at least two head races before they can sit for the Referee examination.

Referees have important roles in officiating these regattas, although the details of some of their assignments change because the racing is different.

Head races are longer races, typically 2.5 to 3.5 miles. Crews race against the clock. Instead of lane numbers, crews carry registered and unique entry numbers. Crews entered in the same event are started sequentially in numerical order. The starting time for each crew is recorded at the start line and the finishing time of each is recorded at the finish line. The elapsed time is calculated, any penalty times added, the results are posted, and winners are announced. The specific rules regarding the route of the race, passing, yielding to a faster crew, and penalties are unique to each course and regatta; it is important for the official to know and understand these rules.

**Rules for Head Races:** Head race rules are found in Article VIII of the *Rules of Rowing*. These rules tend to be more general than sprint race rules because head race courses, being much longer than sprint courses, have idiosyncratic characteristics. Regatta committees are expected to establish additional, specific rules to meet local conditions. Some head race rules are different qualitatively than sprint rules because they call for time penalties—something that cannot be done at sprint regattas.

Because head races can easily handle all types of crews—ages, skills, and boat categories, they are entertaining spectacles. At the larger head races the racing and general activity is non-stop. Despite the differences, the referee's role is the same as at a sprint race—to see that the regatta is safe and fair.

### Head Race Referee Assignments:

*Chief Referee.* For a head race, the Chief Referee has an additional responsibility. The Chief Referee must be certain that the entire course is under observation by monitors (see below) who have the ability to communicate any safety problems.

*Start Marshal.* One of the most critical jobs at a head race is that of the Start Marshal who must inventory the crews and organize them into proper sequence and spacing as they begin the race. This is an assignment for a calm person with a clear voice and a large store of patience. *Starter.* The starter is usually in charge of a start team—several people who will identify the crews as they cross the start line and record their starting times.

*Chief Judge.* Just as is in a sprint regatta, the Chief Judge is responsible for the accuracy of the results. However at a head race, much of the work of recording boat numbers and times and calculating elapsed times is delegated to volunteers working as timers, clerks, and computer operators.

*Monitor.* Referees sometimes serve as monitors. These are the people who are posted along the race course to observe the racing and traveling crews. They look for safety problems and for rule (buoy or traffic) violations. Non-licensed volunteers often perform this assignment. Monitors must have a means to communicate their observations to the Chief Referee or surrogate.

*Control Commission.* These duties are the same as for sprint races.

### 13. ADVANCING THROUGH THE REFEREE RANKS

There is an established rank structure that applies to all USRowing referees. In a very real sense, the objective for establishing ranks is to provide assurance to the community of competitive rowers and coaches that all licensed officials, anywhere in the country, have achieved a uniform level of competence.

#### What qualities define “competency” as an official?

Thorough knowledge and understanding of the published *Rules of Rowing*. The ability to perform the skills and mechanics associated with each of the standard assignments, such as flag work, launch positioning, and the prescribed issuance of particular commands. Judgment, which is the ability to interpret and respond to situations commonly encountered, and which can be further defined as proper recognition of which rules apply to particular situations and circumstances. Finally, there are the more intangible aspects of officiating, which involve the ability to respond to situations in a manner that always preserves and promotes safety and fairness while projecting an image of confidence and decisiveness—and without appearing overbearing, condescending, or “officious.”

The present system for training and advancement is designed to bring all individuals to the same level of competency—that of a licensed Assistant Referee. rank is bestowed after a prescribed period of on-the-job learning as a candidate Referee; this ‘on-the-job training’ is to ensure that the aspiring official knows from firsthand observation what duties and task they can expected to perform. The candidate Referee period culminates with a formal evaluation that documents competency and independence in performing each of the standard assignments that Referees must be capable of fulfilling. Being licensed as an Assistant Referee requires passing a written examination that covers the *Rules of Rowing* as well as the general governance structure of USRowing and the Referee Committee. The primary purpose for this examination is to cause referee candidates to read and begin to absorb the Rules from the very outset. It creates an awareness of the organizational structure of USRowing, which is deemed important because Referees are perhaps the most visible representatives of the organization to the competitive community.

**The Assistant Referee:** The Referee Committee will assign a Mentor (who possesses a Referee license) to work with and advise each newly licensed Assistant Referee. The Assistant Referee is required to work a certain number of regattas each year and to work at more than one venue. In addition, each Assistant must accumulate a prescribed number of written evaluations of their work performance in each of the standard assignments (Marshal, Starter, Judge-at-Start, Referee, Judge, and Control Commission). The only proven pathway for achieving competency as a rowing official is through practical work experience.

Requiring a minimum number of regattas each year accomplishes two purposes. First, it provides the necessary work to “bag the numbers” in each of the assigned positions. Second, it helps the Assistant Referee to prove and validate their commitment to working as a volunteer official by making themselves available to assist, at the very least, at a minimum number of regattas each year.

Very few regatta courses meet the full specifications of the ideal upon which the Rules are based. The requirement to work at more than one venue is meant to ensure a breadth of exposure to conditions and circumstances that officials will be expected to contend with when licensed.

The period as an Assistant Referee is meant to be much more than simply a time for accumulating work experience. Whenever possible, Assistants will be paired with more-senior referees who can provide guidance and advice while relieving the Assistant of some of the pressure that often accompanies first-time assignments. Note that experience is not documented simply by checking off the number of times that one has worked at each position. The requirement that Assistants be formally evaluated by more senior officials while they accumulate this experience is intended to provide honest feedback: praise when deserved and constructive input on skills and judgment that may still be weak.

All individuals will hold the rank of Assistant Referee for at least two years. They will be expected to complete the prescribed work experience and, if they decide they wish to pursue moving up in the rank structure to Referee, they will begin to work toward Referee sometime during their third or fourth year. The Referee Committee will extend this period into a fifth year when presented with extenuating circumstances. However, all Assistant Referees must demonstrate satisfactory progress towards achieving the competencies that cumulatively are required for advancement to Referee. After completing all the evaluations and submitting satisfactory evaluations, an Assistant Referee may choose to remain at this rank and continue work as an official without the requirement for supervision and evaluation by a Referee. Or, they may petition their Regional Representative to be advanced in rank to Referee, once they have met the requirements for doing so. Should the Assistant Referee choose to advance in rank they should submit their evaluation forms to the Chair of their examination panel.

The complete list of requirements for advancing through the rank of Assistant Referee is found in the Referee Committee’s Internal Operating Procedures, which is listed in the referee section of the USRowing web site.

**Advancement to Referee:** Since implementation of the present Referee rank structure in 1996, Assistant Referees have banded together to share their nervous anticipation of the dreaded referee examination. Although this is to some extent simply a reflection of human

nature, the sense of dread which seems to haunt some Assistants over their pending examination is unfortunate. In fact, “examination” is a misnomer. All too often, examinations imply the attempt to discover the failings in a person; this is exactly the opposite of what is intended. The entire period as an Assistant Referee is meant to be one of building up in terms of experience, knowledge, skill, and personal confidence.

The expectation that all Assistant Referees advance in rank to Referee should not be considered a threat or a potentially insurmountable challenge. Rather, it is meant to represent the culminating step in a process that has been underway since passing the Assistant’s examination. Viewed in this light, this rite of passage is designed to serve as a standardized evaluation to confirm that each Assistant has achieved the necessary level of competence to qualify as a Referee.

Remember that the most fundamental purpose for these ranks is to assure that all licensed USRowing officials are prepared to conduct rowing competitions anywhere in the country—and at all levels—in a manner that is uniformly consistent with the expectations for safety and fairness as prescribed in the *Rules of Rowing*.

Advancing from Assistant to Referee requires successful completion of a written evaluation that is designed to allow the Assistant to demonstrate their ability to interpret different regatta situations and integrate and apply the *Rules* in an appropriate fashion. Typically, the Assistant is given one week to complete this exercise, which is distributed to several Clinicians for review and comment. Whenever possible, these Clinicians meet with the Assistant to review their responses and to provide the Assistant with an opportunity to clarify or correct any statements that the Clinicians deem incorrect or inappropriate.

There is a practical evaluation, intended to provide the Assistant with the opportunity to demonstrate that they have achieved sufficient competence in the basic roles of a referee and that they can perform these roles without supervision. Historically, this practical evaluation has been conducted off the water as a “board examination,” with the Assistant role-playing various referee assignments while the examiner(s) create various situations on a simulated racecourse. The Referee Committee has begun to use live evaluations in which the Assistant works with several different Clinicians in each of the assigned positions, usually over the course of several regattas. Currently, whenever possible, live evaluations are being used in the belief that they provide the fairest and most realistic opportunity for the Assistant to demonstrate their mastery of skills, knowledge, and judgment. Note that the standard practice is to not allow an Assistant to begin this process until their Mentor and/or other senior officials who are familiar with their work and progress agree that they are ready to successfully complete both the written and practical evaluations. Therefore, it is exceedingly rare for an individual to “fail” their evaluation. If, however, their performance is judged to demonstrate less than the full range of expected competencies, they will be given appropriate feedback and counsel and allowed one additional opportunity for evaluation.

**The Referee:** This is the terminal rank in the USRowing referee rank structure, although a limited number of “lateral endorsements” exist for individuals who desire to take on additional responsibilities as a Referee. Given the fundamental belief that one’s skills, knowledge, and judgment can only be maintained through continued experience, all Referees are expected to work a minimum of four regattas per year. Within a given two year period, they must officiate at a minimum of four different racecourses and work at least one National Standard Regatta in order to maintain an active Referee license. These requirements are meant to ensure that all active referees are maintaining at least minimal depth and breadth of experience. To keep current with the *Rules* and procedures, all referees must attend at least one clinic each year.

The Referee Committee has set the goal of administering a re-certification examination to all Assistant Referees and Referees every four years. This serves as an instrument to assess current knowledge and application of the *Rules* and procedures that govern the conduct of regattas. Referees who score below a designated percentage are required to meet with a Clinician to review their answers and possibly upgrade an identified area of weakness or deficiency. Finally, there is a requirement to enter into the Referee Database the regattas and clinics you attended during the previous year. Although this latter requirement may not contribute to an individual’s competency as an official, it enables the Referee Committee to fulfill its obligation to the rowing community of assuring that all active officials are current in their experience and practice.

The full requirements for maintaining the Referee license are listed in the Referee Committee’s Internal Operating Procedures, which are available for viewing through the referee section of the USRowing web site.

In addition to the formal levels of the rank structure system, three other levels, considered “lateral endorsements,” are recognized.

**The Chief Referee:** The role of the chief referee is a broad one. As the sport has grown, many regattas have become large and require large referee staffs. Today, Chief Referees act more as managers of Referees and perform less as Referees themselves. As Referee managers, Chief Referees select, brief, assign, supervise, and debrief the referee staff.

Chief Referees have important and necessary interactions with LOCs. Frequently, they are called on to meet with regatta committees to provide advice and criticism on regatta management.

In addition, attention to safety has increased. Larger regattas mean more opportunities for accidents. Many regatta committees seek USRowing regatta insurance. The Chief Referee, as the senior safety officer, must evaluate whether the regatta has met the requirements of the USRowing Registered Regatta Safety Checklist and whether it thereby qualifies for USRowing insurance.

The Referee Committee recognizes the broad scope and difficulty of the Chief Referee role. It conducts a Chief Referee College every three years to train referees who will serve in that position.

If you are interested in being a Chief Referee, let your regional committee representative know and in preparation for future assignments, request that you have the opportunity to work with an experienced Chief Referee who you know and trust. Like each of the other assignments staffed by licensed officials, the position of Chief Referee requires certain knowledge and skills that are best learned by direct observation.

There are no formal or specific means to evaluate whether an individual is prepared to do a competent job as Chief Referee when they are first promoted to Referee. At large regattas, there are a number of administrative and leadership tasks that the Chief Referee must handle that are never formally addressed during the apprenticeship years as Assistant Referee. Although attaining the rank of Referee qualifies one to serve as a Chief Referee, it does not mandate that one must serve in that capacity. The reality is that at this particular juncture in their Referee experience, some people are prepared and some are not. Do not feel obligated to take on this additional assignment when you are promoted. It's not a bad assignment, but one that requires the preparation and willingness to accept the additional work and pressure that comes along with the job.

**The Emeritus Referee:** After a referee has retired from officiating, the Referee Committee may, at its discretion, confer the honorary status of Referee Emeritus upon those who have devoted distinguished service to officiating in rowing. A Referee advanced to Emeritus Referee status is released from any requirements to maintain a license. However, Emeritus Referees are valued members of the USRowing Referee family; many continue to contribute to rowing long after their active license has been retired. Emeritus Referees can provide many services, especially assisting clinicians with training and mentoring new officials.

**The Clinician:** The Referee Committee assigns clinicians a key role in disseminating accurate knowledge of the *Rules of Rowing* and in effectively communicating their application to candidates, all referees, and the entire rowing community.

Within each region, the Referee Committee has designated certain experienced Referees as “Clinicians.” In addition to being experienced Referees, these individuals share a very important common characteristic: they are personally willing to share their experience with others. “Experience” can be viewed in two ways. First is longevity. The typical Clinician has been active as a licensed referee for an average of 15 years. Second is breadth of service. Most Clinicians have “seen it all” at least once, and sometimes more often. Their service spans regattas at the different levels of competition and usually in more than one geographic region.

Designation as a Clinician carries with it an expectation of service. As the title implies, Clinicians are the people who serve as instructors in formally scheduled clinics and workshops for referee training and development. In a broader sense, Clinicians serve as mentors to all of the referees within their region.

Whether you are an Assistant Referee or have been working as a Referee for a number of years, situations arise that present new problems and questions to be resolved. In the end, we always learn from the collective experience and wisdom gained from one another as peers in the pursuit of common goals and standards. In the “old days” the network was small and personal contacts between the individual referees occurred on a regular basis. Nowadays, we are more spread out as a result of the explosive growth of competitive rowing; because of this we risk a greater sense of isolation. Clinicians are one of the best resources available for anyone who has an unanswered question, desires a second opinion, or seeks a reasoned critique regarding a decision or action they made. Take advantage of them.

Clinicians are appointed by the Referee Committee to conduct clinics and are assigned to specific referees by the regional representative for the purpose of evaluating them. The list of those authorized to administer Referee clinics may be found in Appendix E of the Referee Committee Internal Operating Procedures.

## 14. Referee Education, Training, and Awareness

In the past, there have been few training materials available for Referees. This situation is slowly changing; this training manual is a direct result of that change. In 1990 Carol and Trig Johnson developed an unofficial Referee Guide as an introduction to officiating for candidate Referees. This valuable contribution was in circulation for many years. The *Rowing Referee Training Manual* is the first official manual endorsed by the USRowing Referee Committee.

Referees have developed most of the materials used for training. With the advent of desktop computing it is becoming increasingly easy to produce high quality handouts, brochures, guides, slide presentations, and other training materials to use. As part of its continuing commitment to Referee education, training and awareness, the Referee Committee is trying to collect, review, and create a central repository of materials for everyone’s use. It is a surprisingly large undertaking and will take several years to accomplish.

In addition, the Referee Committee is striving to find ways to develop and publish more and better training tools. This section describes some of the basic ways Referees can pursue continuing education opportunities.

## Regattas:

*“Every regatta is an opportunity to learn something new!”*

Joan ‘Mama Z’ Zandbergen, Emeritus Referee

All sports officiating is more craft than science, but none more so than rowing. While characterized by a fairly stable set of activities, crew officiating is not readily analyzable. It requires extensive training and experience because Referees are asked to respond to intangible factors in developing situations based on wisdom, intuition, and experience. There is no better way to learn to be a good rowing referee than to work at regattas—be they dual meets between two colleges, small club events, or large regional or national regattas.

*National Standard Regattas.* The primary purpose for identifying certain regattas as National Standard Regattas (NSR) is to identify for officials those regattas that will provide experience at the championship level of rowing. The basic criteria for a regatta to be listed as an NSR are:

- A Class A course or close approximation or that is considered fair to all competitors.
- Consistent application of the rules, especially adherence to the “\*” rules.
- Any Referee is able to work all positions.
- Geographical distribution (there is no limit to the number of NSR regattas in one region)
- A history of high quality competition, adequate launches, very good communication capabilities, a competent LOC, and a high quality group of Referees from which to learn.
- A USRowing registered regatta.

**Clinics:** All referees must attend one clinic each year. There are a wide variety of clinic formats and types, e.g., Introductory, Basic, Advanced, Coxswains, and Rules. Clinics can last for 3 or 4 hours or for 2 or 3 days. They can be held any time of year; a great many occur in January and February.

Clinics are an excellent way to get together with other rowing officials and share experience. Information about clinics is available from your Regional Representative. The USRowing web site has a listing of clinics offered: <http://www.usrowing.org/Referees/RefereeClinics/index.aspx>.

If you cannot locate a clinic near you, contact your regional representative and offer to help organize one. Clinicians are always available to come and conduct a clinic; often what is needed is someone to handle the organizing tasks. You don't have to be a clinician to arrange a clinic. It is a good way to meet new referees.

**Mentors:** Mentors are assigned to help guide Assistant Referees through the process of advancing from Assistant to Referee. We hope that you, as a protégé, will be encouraged by the mentoring process to provide guidance and feedback to the candidates and brand new assistants coming in behind you.

Being assigned as a protégé to a referee is not an exclusive or restrictive arrangement. Do not think because you as an assistant are assigned to a mentor referee that other referees will no longer provide feedback—or that you cannot go to other referees for advice. Be proactive about asking for feedback, advice, and direction from your mentor and any other experienced referee with whom you work. This interaction will help you learn and give you a breadth of knowledge far beyond what your own experience will give you. The program goal is to ensure that every one has **at least** one person to turn to for guidance and advice. If your first choice doesn't work, another person might be selected.

Although it is the Regional Representative's responsibility to pair mentors and protégés, you will usually be asked for your input as to who you might want as a mentor. Whoever you select should be someone you are comfortable speaking and working with, or someone whose skills and opinions as a referee you trust.

**Referee College:** Established and supervised by the Referee Committee and operated on an annual basis since 1990, the Referee College serves as a unique resource to address referee training at a level that extends beyond what can be offered in a standard clinic. The College was renamed in 2001 the Julian Wolf National Referee Training School in honor of its originator and first director. Participants spend two and one-half days in classroom and small group problem-oriented sessions, exploring in great depth issues relating to all aspects of officiating. There are typically 25-28 participants from all around the country, led by a staff of 3-4 experienced instructors. The Referee Training School is held at one of the US Olympic Training Centers—typically San Diego, CA, in late September or early October.

Each year the focus of the school is different. The present cycle is Basic Referee and Chief Referee; this cycle is repeated on an alternating basis. Each title is descriptive. The Basic Referee School is directed towards adding to and developing the Assistant Referee's

knowledge base and ability to correctly judge and react to common situations. The Chief Referee School is designed to prepare Referees for becoming the Chief Referee at a large regatta; it addresses the many administrative and logistical issues of which the Chief Referee must be aware. Leadership skills are emphasized.

These National Referee Schools are open to all licensed officials. Candidates are admitted, when space is available, to the Basic Referee School. Announcement of the upcoming School is typically made in the spring; the deadline for applications is early summer. Applicants at the level of experience appropriate for each School are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Referee Committee members will actively recruit and encourage individuals to attend a particular school; an effort is made to achieve as uniform a spread of participants from across the country as the applicant pool will allow. Applicants who are not at the targeted level of experience for a given school will be admitted whenever space is available. Each participant is responsible for their own travel expenses to attend the School. There are no charges for housing, meals, or use of classroom facilities; these costs are covered by the US Olympic Committee, which operates the Training Centers. We are able to make use of these facilities because USRowing is a member organization of the US Olympic Committee. The Referee Committee has established a modest scholarship fund and will provide grants on a confidential basis to qualified applicants who could not otherwise afford to attend a National Referee Training School. Contact a member of the Referee Committee for more information.

**USRowing Referee Group ([www.groups.google.com](http://www.groups.google.com)).** Technology is improving many aspects of our sport and our activities as referees. As an example, recently several referees stood up a referee community page using Google Groups to provide all referees with an easy alternative method of communication. This site is designed increase the opportunities to expand the knowledge base of all Referees by enabling the accumulated knowledge of the entire Referee Corps to be shared beyond exchanges that occur at clinics, regattas, and in email. Only licensed officials and candidate referees may be part of this group. To join, go to the Google Groups page and search for the USRowing Referees, send a message to the group owner and ask for an invitation. The group area consists of a Files section that lists

documents that other Referees have found useful; a Discussion area where Referees can share scenarios, questions and current news and information; and a Pages section that contains external links to items of interest. In addition, there is a Members page where you can view all current members of the group.



Photo by: Donna Grillo, USRowing Referee



Photo by: Donna Grillo, USRowing Referee

## 15. GLOSSARY

**Albano Course.** A FISA race course equivalent to the national USRowing “A” course. Although not specifically defined in the *Rules of Rowing*, an Albano course is fully buoyed along the margins of each lane and has distinctively colored buoys to mark the 100-meter breakage zone. The course is distinctively marked each 250 meters and in the finish line region; it has a starting bridge (platform) that is adjustable for shells of different lengths.

**Assistant Referee.** A licensed USRowing rowing official who has completed all observations and passed the written assistant’s examination. May perform every role at a competition except Chief Referee.

**Asterisk Rule (\*).** In the USRowing *Rules of Rowing*, a rule that is absolutely binding. It is marked by an asterisk (\*) in the rulebook. Local exceptions and amendments are possible for rules without an asterisk.

**“Back Water,” “Back.”** A command given by the coxswain that directs the crew to row backwards. The coxswain will usually designate which rowers to back water, e.g., “*One, Three, and Five . . . Back.*” Or, “*Stern pair, two strokes back.*” Coxswains give this command during backing and turning maneuvers at slow speeds, in cramped spaces, or near a stake boat or dock. Officials can employ maneuvering commands to help crews maintain their positions.

**Blades.** The broad, flattened part of the oar. Rowers often refer to their oars as “blades.” Oar blades carry distinctive designs to identify the crew’s school, club, or program.

**Bow, Bowperson, Bowman.** The rower seated closest to the bow in Seat 1.

**Bow Ball.** The small rubber ball attached to the bow of the shell. The bow ball serves three important functions. First, and most important, it is for safety. The sharp point of a fast moving shell can be dangerous. A boat absolutely may not race without a bow ball. This is an Asterisk Rule (\*). Second, the Judge at Start, sights along the bow balls to align the start of the race. Third, the Judges at the finish sight on the bow ball to determine finish placements.

**Bow Marker.** The number placed on the bow of shells that identifies the crew. It should correspond to the number of the lane to which the boat is assigned or, in head races, the participant number.

**Breakage Zone.** The first 100 meters of a marked course, or the first 20 seconds of an unmarked course, is part of the starting area. If breakage occurs before the shell’s bow ball crosses the 100-meter marker or in the first 20 seconds, the race is stopped, repairs made, and the race restarted without penalty. The breakage rule is not subject to interpretation but may be subject to local rules. The referee needs to be sure they understand what the breakage rule is for the regatta they are officiating.

**Buoy.** A floating marker used to mark a course. Marked courses have buoy lines separating lanes.

**Button.** A collar that keeps the oar from slipping through the oarlock.

**Catch.** The “catch” is the moment when the blade enters the water.

**“Catch a Crab.”** When the oar breaks the water at an angle, instead of perpendicularly, it can get trapped under the surface. When a rower “catches a crab,” the oar handle is driven into the rower’s stomach, chest, or neck. In a fast-moving shell, it can throw the rower completely out of the boat, or cause injury.

**Centers.** The interval of time between races or heats. A regatta running on eight-minute centers means that a new race should begin every eight minutes.

**“Check It Down.”** A command given by coxswains that directs the crew to position their oar blades vertically in the water, providing a braking action. The command is similar to “Hold water!” but less urgent.

**Clinic.** A formal period of instruction on the fine points of officiating given by members of the USRowing Referee Committee or by Clinicians. Referees must attend at least one clinic every year — although most attend several. Candidates must attend a clinic as part of obtaining an Assistant’s license.

**Cox, Coxswain.** The small, loud, assertive person who steers the boat and gives rowing commands to the crew. Most coxswains sit in the stern of the shell facing the stroke although some shells have the coxswain virtually lying down ahead of the bowperson. Pronounced “cox” or “cox’n.”

**Cox Box™.** Cox Box is a brand name, now used generically, for the shell’s small on-board public address system. The coxswain uses a head-mounted microphone to give commands to rowers. Speakers are spaced throughout the shell.

**Disqualification.** A formal penalty assessed for flagrantly violating the Rules of Rowing that results in the crew being removed from the regatta. This is the most severe penalty an official may impose. Any disqualification must be reported in writing to the Referee Committee.

**Double, Double Sculls, (2X).** A racing boat for two rowers which is rigged with 2 sculling oars per rower.

**Eight (8+).** An eight is a racing boat with eight rowers plus a coxswain. The shell is rigged with eight sweep oars, one per rower.

**Emeritus.** An honorary title given by the USRowing to an official after they have retired from being a licensed referee, in recognition of their contributions and service.

**Erg, Ergo, Ergometer.** A land-based rowing machine that approximates the rowing motion and includes an electronic monitor for measuring the strokes per minute and distance.

**Exclusion.** A formal penalty assessed for violating the rules of rowing that results in a competitor or crew being excluded from rowing in an event. The competitor or crew remains eligible to compete in other events at that regatta.

**False Start.** Breaking the plane of the starting line before the starting command is given. The Judge at Start may assess a Warning for a false start.

**Feathering.** When the oar blade is brought out of the water, turned horizontal to the surface, and is swung back to begin another stroke is known as feathering the oar.

**Fin (or Skeg).** A stabilizing projection from the keel of a racing shell which, in conjunction with the tiller / rudder assembly, enables positive steering control.

**FISA.** Federation Internationale des Societes d’Aviron. The international governing body for the sport of rowing. It was established in 1892. FISA organizes the Olympic Championships and the annual World Championships.

**Four with Cox (4+) and Four without Cox (4-).** A racing boat that contains four rowers. The boat is rigged with four sweep oars, one per rower. Depending on whether the crew is coxed, the usual terminology is “Four with” and “Four without.”

**“Give Way.”** A command to stay clear of another vessel.

**Hatchet Blade.** A type of oar that resembles a hatchet that has become popular with almost all crews. See Blades.

**Head Race.** A long-distance race (2.5 or more miles), often over a winding river course, in which boats start at different times and race against the clock. Head races are usually held in the fall rowing season.

**“Heads Up!”** This is a command for you to look about, quickly. A shell or scull is about to pass through your space. This command is generally heard at or near where shells and sculls are being carried between the water and the boathouse or trailer.

**Heat, Heats.** A heat is a race in which a specified number of crews may qualify to advance to the semifinal or final.

**Heel Ties.** These cords are part of the footgear release that fastens the heels of shoes to foot stretchers in the boat. Heels are not permitted to lift more than 3 inches off the stretcher, in order to allow a rower to free him or herself if a boat capsizes.

**“Hold Water!”** A command given by the coxswain for the crew to hold their oar blades vertically (i.e., “oars squared”) in the water, in order to stop the forward progress of the boat. The coxswain usually designates which rowers to hold water, e.g., “Two, Four, and Six . . . Hold Water!” This command is used during turning maneuvers at low speeds.

**Hot Docking, Hot Seating.** Smaller rowing programs often must use the same shells (and some rowers) in more than one closely-spaced event. LOCs ordinarily allow such programs to have priority in docking, changing crews or rowers, and re-launching.

**Launch.** (a) The motorboat used by Referees; (b) the act of placing a boat in the water.

**“Let It Run.”** A command given by the coxswain to the crew to stop rowing and allow the shell to coast through the water. The coxswain may give this command while the crew is carrying the shell on land where it means to stop walking. The nautical term, “Way Enough,” has a similar meaning.

**Local Organizing Committee (LOC).** The group that organizes regattas, handles logistics, and arranges for volunteers. Each LOC subscribes to USRowing guidelines and procedures, but may be subject to rules and regulations of their state or city athletic associations.

**Obstacle, Obstruction.** Anything that may impede the movement of a shell (e.g., shoreline, debris, buoy, bridge abutment, another boat). There are two types of obstacles, previously known, such as a pier, and previously unknown, such as a log floating on the course. A crew encountering an unknown obstacle and altering their course to avoid the obstacle may be entitled to consideration.

**Octuple (8X).** A racing boat with eight rowers and a coxswain. The boat is rigged with 2 sculling oars per rower. The octuple configuration is rarely raced. It is most often used to train a large number of scullers.

**Painter.** Small boats are towed or made to a mooring by a bow line called a “painter.” Referees often hold onto the painter in order to steady themselves while following a race.

**Pair With Cox (2+), Pair Without Cox (2-).** A racing boat with two rowers. The shell is rigged with two sweep oars, one oar per rower. The usual term is “Pair with” and “Pair without.”

**Petite Final.** This is a consolation race for those competitors that did not qualify for the finals.

**Personal Flotation Device (PFD).** U.S. Coast Guard-approved Personal Flotation Device. All boats are required to carry sufficient PFDs for every person on board. Note: Oars on shells and sculls are classified as PFDs.

**Point.** An aiming target, an imaginary point, or a place in the distance toward which the coxswain steers to keep on course (such as a flagpole or building). On an unmarked course, the coxswain may ask the Starter, “Where is my point?” which means, “What spot in the distance do I aim for to keep on course?” The Starter may direct the competitors to “Get your point” or “Keep your point,” which means to orient the shell toward the finish line.

**Port.** Port is the left side of the shell from the coxswain’s point of view or the right side from the rower’s perspective.

**Power Ten.** This is a racing tactic. During the course of a race, a shell may attempt to surge ahead by performing ten (or what ever number announced by the coxswain) powerful strokes.

**Progression.** The sequence by which crews advance at a regatta, from heats to semifinals to finals.

**Puddles.** The circular wash made by the oars. The puddles left by an elite heavyweight men's eight can cause significant interference for other crews and the Referee's launch.

**Quad, Quadruple (4X).** A racing boat with four rowers that is rigged with two sculling oars per rower.

**Recreational Shell.** A recreational shell has a wider beam and more stability than racing shells. While slower and more stable, they are suitable for novice rowers and rougher water.

**Referee.** Formerly known as Judge-Referee or Juge-Arbitre, the Referee is the USRowing licensed official. The Chief Referee holds a Referee license, assigns duties to all other officials, and is President of the Jury. The Referees follow the progress of the race down the course. Judges are found at fixed places. The Chief Judge supervises Judges at the finish line. Juge-Arbitre is the French title. The term "umpire" is normally used in international competitions to denote referees.

**Regatta.** A boat racing event consisting of a series of races and attendant activities arranged by a boat, sailing, or rowing club or other organization

**Repechage.** A French word meaning "another chance." National, World, and Olympic competitions are double elimination events. Crews that do not do well in the Heats and fail to advance to the next level get "another chance" by doing well in the Repechage race. Often abbreviated to "Rep."

**Reprimand.** A formal penalty for violating the Rules of Rowing which carries no weight other than the weight of the official's words. This is the lowest level of penalty an official may impose. It may be a precursor to a Warning if there is a repeat violation.

**Rigger.** (a) The shortened form of "outrigger," which is the triangular device attached to the side of the boat that holds the oar in place. It includes several braces, a backstay, a pin, oarlock, and gate. (b) The technician who maintains shells in useable condition.

**Rules of Rowing.** The official rules published annually by the US Rowing Association. Latest versions can be found on the US-Rowing website: [www.usrowing.org](http://www.usrowing.org)

**Scull.** A racing boat, powered by oars, where the oarsperson uses two sculling oars. There are singles (1x), doubles (2x), quadruples (4x), and octuples (8x).

**Sculler.** A specific term for a person rowing a scull.

**Sculling Oar.** The oar used in a scull where each rower uses two oars. Sculling oars are smaller and lighter than sweep oars.

**"Set Up."** A command given by the coxswain to rowers to stabilize the shell with their oars. The rower holds the oar handle with the oar resting flat on the surface of the water. This command is given to designated rowers (e.g., "Bow Pair, Set Up.") during backing and turning maneuvers at slow speeds.

**Settle.** Crews usually begin the race at a high stroke rate (40-44 for an eight) and reduce the stroke rate (32-36) or "settle" during the middle of the race and finish in a sprint (40-42). A clean, smooth "settle" is a sign of a well-trained crew.

**Shell.** A racing boat powered by oars.

**Single Scull.** A racing boat for one rower with two sculling oars.

**Skeg (or Fin).** A stabilizing projection on the keel of a racing shell, which in conjunction with the rudder enables positive steering control.

**Slide.** The sliding seat and track mechanism that the rower sits on in the hull of the boat. Occasionally a rower causes the slide to jump off its track (i.e., "a jumped slide"). Jumped slides are not considered as broken equipment in the Rules, however, individual regattas may modify this.

**Sling.** A device for temporarily holding a shell on land. They are used in pairs and may look like a folding canvas seat/camp stool.

**Sprint Race.** A race of 2000 meters or less where the first crew to reach the finish line wins. Sprint races may have lanes (up to eight) marked with buoys. Sprint races are usually held in the spring and summer, as opposed to head races which are normally held in autumn.

**Squared Blades, Squared Oars.** The moment when the oars (i.e., blades) are at right angles to the water surface.

**Stake Boat.** The boat or platform anchored at the starting line. The person in the boat holds the stern of the shell to help maintain its alignment prior to the start.

**Stake Boat Person.** The person who holds the stern of the shell at the starting platform or from the stake boat.

**Starboard.** Starboard is the right side of the shell from the coxswain's point of view or the left side from the rowers' perspective.

**Starter's Platform.** A platform (or anchored boat) which is positioned 30 to 50 meters behind the Starting Platform, usually elevated to allow wide visibility.

**Starting area.** That area encompassing the starter's platform, the starting dock or bridge, the alignment and Judge at Start's position, and the race course from the start line to the end of the breakage zone.

**Starting Platform.** A platform at the start from which shells are held and aligned for the start. Sometimes referred to as the “Starting bridge.” A stake boat is another type of starting platform.

**Stern.** The back end or rear part of a boat.

**Straight (as in “Straight Four”).** A shell without a coxswain.

**Stretcher (or foot stretcher).** An adjustable inclined board in front of the slide to which rowers attach their feet. It looks similar to a board with running shoes attached.

**Stroke.** The rower seated closest to the stern. The stroke sets the cadence for the rest of the crew.

**Stroke Meter, Stroke Watch.** A device for measuring the stroke rate, i.e., number of strokes taken by a crew in a minute. Coaches and Referees use a specially designed stopwatch. Coxswains have a digital meter that displays the actual stroke rate; it is usually part of the Cox Box™.

**Sweep Oar.** The oar used in shells where each rower uses a single oar. Shells with sweep oars include pairs, fours, and eights. Sweep oars are larger than sculling oars.

**Umpire.** The term used for all officials licensed by FISA.

**“Under Way.”** A vessel in motion or when not aground, made fast to the shore, or at anchor.

**USRowing.** The acronym for the United States Rowing Association, the national governing body for the sport of rowing in the United States. Its headquarters are in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**USRowing®.** The registered trademark of the United States Rowing Association.

**Wake.** The foamy path of disturbed water left behind a moving boat. Officials make every effort to minimize the impact of wakes, including shielding boats from another referee’s wake.

**Wash.** The waves made by the hull of a boat moving through the water.

**Warning.** A formal penalty assessed for violating the *Rules of Rowing*. A Warning is often assessed for arriving late to the starting line, violating the traffic pattern, etc. If a crew commits another equivalent offense and is assessed a second warning, the crew is excluded from that event. A Warning expires after the race in which it has been assessed is successfully completed, but remains in effect in any races that are re-rowed.

**“Way Enough.”** A nautical term meaning to stop motion, i.e., stop rowing. The coxswain may give this command while the crew is carrying the shell on land where it means to stop walking. The command, “*Let It Run!*” has a similar meaning.

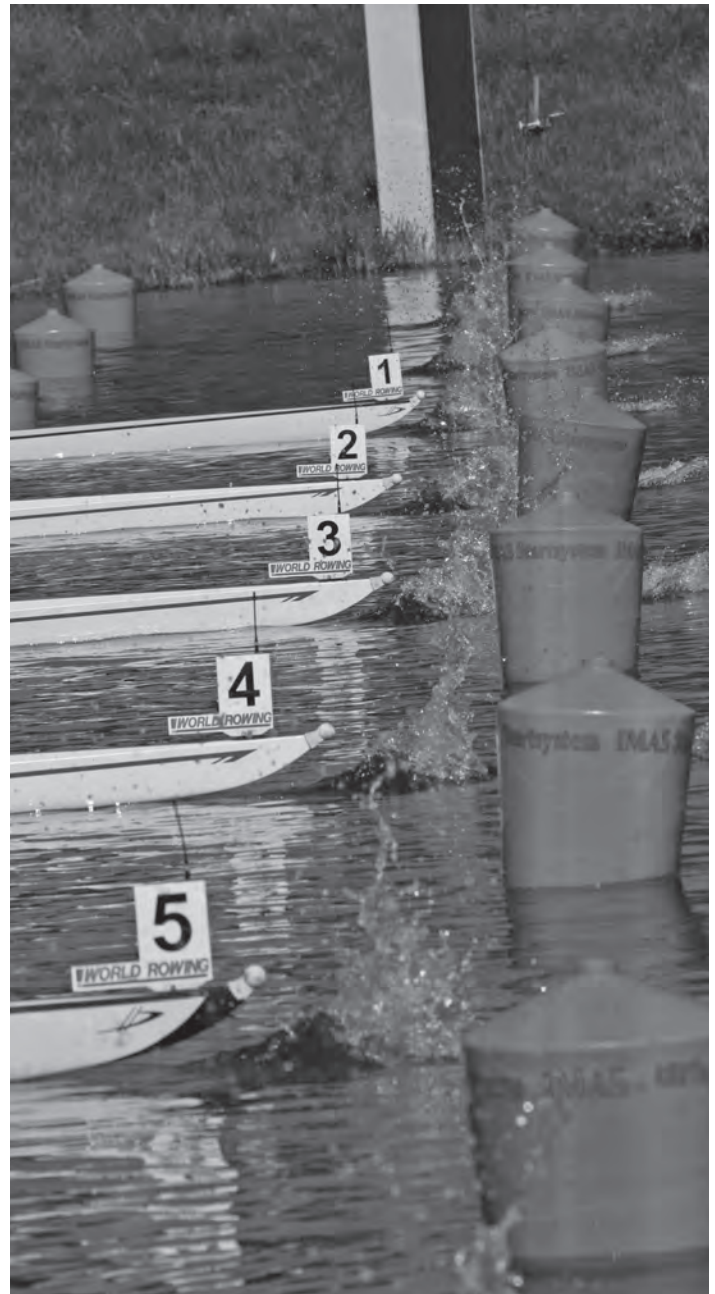


Photo by: Row2K

## 16. OFFICIATING EQUIPMENT

It is not necessary to have a great deal of equipment to be a Referee. Local Organizing Committees are becoming better at providing most of the necessary items you will need, and carrying a large quantity of extra gear can be cumbersome. The list below is divided into mandatory, recommended, and useful categories for your guidance. These are items that some Referees have used over the years, but they are by no means all needed. The best approach is to start with a limited amount of things, expand slowly, and keep most of it in the trunk of your car or in a dedicated bag.

Out-of-pocket expenses incurred during volunteer services to qualified organizations such as USRowing are tax deductible. Expenses include the cost and upkeep of uniforms, mandatory equipment, and mileage and supplies used when performing services. Details are available from the Referee Committee.

### Mandatory Equipment

**Stopwatch.** For your first stopwatch, buy a simple electronic stopwatch for about \$20—don't confuse yourself with unneeded functions and buttons. After you have had some experience, buy a second stopwatch capable of recording more than five split times. Some of the more sophisticated models calculate stroke rates. Most Referees carry more than one watch.

**Clipboard.** You'll need a clipboard to hold your program. Get a large rubber band or a "banker's clasp" (a stainless steel clasp, less than \$1 at office supply stores) to secure the bottom edge of the program. A clear plastic cover, such as a sealable refrigerator bag, is helpful in keeping your program dry. Many officials use a box-type plastic clipboard available at office supply stores that can hold paper and spare pens, rubber bands, and binder clips.

**Pencil or Pen.** Many officials favor a lead pencil because it writes even when the program is wet. Ink from a ballpoint pen doesn't run in the rain. Water-soluble ink that can be wiped off easily is helpful in identifying crews prior to the start of a race.

**USRowing Rules of Rowing.** Keep the latest edition handy (about \$5 from USRowing Merchandise (609) 751-0700 or 1-800-314-4769). You will refer to it often. Licensed officials receive a new copy each time the book is reprinted. Currently, this happens once a year, usually in March.

**Wristwatch.** Don't take a good watch onto the course. Take an inexpensive, easy to read, water-resistant sport watch. It is very important to keep track of official regatta time.

**Red Flag and White Flag.** You may have to manufacture your own flags from fade-resistant red and white fabric. Construct two flags (at least 18 x 18 inches square) attached to 2-foot long handles. These flags can be obtained from Referees or volunteers who make them for sale.

**Megaphone.** Get a powerful megaphone, at least 15 watts and preferably 25. Plan to spend around \$100. Megaphones are available at most marine supply stores, through catalogs and online sources, and direct from the manufacturer. Fanon, Speco, and Radio Shack all make good devices. Megaphones aren't waterproof, however, and inevitably 'phones take a dunking and need to be replaced or rebuilt. It's an unfortunate but unavoidable cost of doing business.

**Noise Maker.** Most officials use the siren that operates with their megaphone. You may use an air horn (\$15 - \$20 at most marine supply stores), whistle or cowbell. Many experienced officials prefer to use a brass hand bell for normal operations (e.g., stopping a race) and reserve the siren for true emergencies (e.g., clearing the course in unsafe conditions or weather).

## Recommended Equipment

**Waterproof Bag.** You'll need a bag to carry all of this stuff. It should be a fairly neutral color, waterproof, and have sufficient capacity for all of your gear.

**Extra Change of Clothing.** Sooner or later, you too will fall out of a boat or off a dock. Sweaters are nice. Wool or polyester fleece stays warm even when wet.

**First Aid Kit.** Most sporting goods and marine supply stores sell first aid kits that contain appropriate items. Band-Aids and toilet paper are useful.

**Binoculars.** A good set of binoculars is essential, but they will get wet, dropped, and borrowed. You may want to investigate a used pair.

**Tool kit.** You should carry a small bag of tools including: duct tape, pliers, small crescent wrench, Allen wrenches, pocket knife, flathead screw driver, Phillips head screw driver, assorted nuts, bolts, cotter pins (ask the coaches about sizes), and more duct tape. Don't forget the duct tape.

**Cellular Phone.** Very handy item to call home when you are delayed on the water or to contact the Local Organizing Committee.

**Painter.** Most officials hold onto the painter, the line attached to the bow of most launches, to steady themselves while following a race. You can make your own clean, dry painter from a 12-foot length of nylon line. Tie overhand knots at convenient spots. It's useful when you need to tow a disabled boat and a number of other situations. A quick-action carabineer similar to those that rock climbers used makes attaching a line easy and quick.

**Foul Weather Gear.** Look for blue, gray or black rain gear. Many sporting goods stores sell blue rain gear. If local sources fail, try camping or surplus catalog retailers. Do not wear bright orange, yellow, red, or white rain gear. For cold foul weather gear, many referees have started wearing Survival Suits; these suits are generally put in as a group order and information circulated prior to the order via email.

**Boots.** Non-slip, waterproof boots or shoes are good for the sole. There is nothing worse than cold, wet feet.  
**Gloves.** Any old gloves will do. Sailing gloves won't lose their grip when wet.

**Personal Flotation Device (PFD).** Get a comfortable Type III or better PFD. The vest-style can be worn under your uniform for flotation and warmth. Don't depend upon the race organizers to have sufficient PFDs for you. Bring your own. Some officials purchase PFD vests that have small CO2 canisters that can inflate the vest if the wearer falls in the water.

**Space Blanket.** They're small and only cost a couple of dollars at most sporting goods' stores; when you need one, you will need it quickly.

**Sun Screen.** Use at least 15 – 30 SPF strength. The sun can be intense on the water as it is not only coming from above but is reflected off the water surface; similar to a tanning bed!

## Other Useful Equipment

**Plastic kitchen bags.** Clear vegetable or freezer storage bags are great for 8-1/2 x 11 inch printed race schedules. Large black garbage or trash bags are very useful as substitute space blankets, rain gear, and keeping equipment dry in the bottom of a leaky boat.

**Calculator.** A simple electronic calculator is often useful in calculating finish line times.

**Clamps.** Carpenter's C-clamps, spring-loaded clamps, and circular radiator-hose clamps can keep items from blowing away aboard a launch.

**Shock cord.** Bungee-style elastic ropes, with metal hooks on both ends, are available at hardware stores and can help keep equipment in place on a starting dock, the finish line, or in a launch.

**Marine Weather-Band Radio.** These are inexpensive transistor radios specially tuned to the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) marine weather stations.

**Insect Repellent.** Mosquitoes and flies can be a problem during certain times of the year.

**Sun Glasses.** Look for 100% UV block lenses. Polarized lenses help reduce glare on the water. Consider spending an additional \$2 and buy neck straps or floats for your glasses.

**Something to Drink.** Bring water or fruit juice, and coffee or soft drinks if you prefer them. Never bring alcoholic beverages. In hot weather, toss a couple of frozen 12-ounce bottles of water in your bag. They will thaw by the time you need them.

**Something to Eat.** Fruit (that doesn't spoil easily), nuts, or energy bars are nearly essential in these days of long regattas and very tight schedules. Not all regattas arrange for food for the officials or schedule time for them to eat. It's nice to have something to share with your launch driver.

**Personal Medication.** If you use medication, bring it along. Many officials carry allergy medicine, tissue, antacid tablets, and pain relievers.

**Extra Batteries.** Did you ever try to find a replacement battery for a stopwatch at 7 a.m. at a convenience store? Buy replacement batteries for all of your electronic gear—stopwatch, wristwatch, megaphone, radio—and carry them with you.

**Bailing Cups.** Carry several small plastic containers or cups as give-away bailing cups. Be sure to save one for your own boat, in case it doesn't have a bailer.

**Give-Away Clothing.** Wool knit watch cap, pair heavy socks, work gloves, rain poncho, etc., can be "loaned" to your driver or other officials as the need arises. Many volunteers are unprepared for the wet, cold conditions found at many regattas.

#### **Good Sources of Information:**

[www.usrowing.org](http://www.usrowing.org) is the official website of the United States Rowing Association, headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana.

[www.row2k.com](http://www.row2k.com) is an independent rowing website with links to many related sites in the United States and around the world.

*Independent Rowing News* is a magazine published 20 times a year that provides results of races, a calendar of events, columns on training and health, and excellent photography. Available by subscription: [www.RowingNews.com](http://www.RowingNews.com)

[www.groups.google.com](http://www.groups.google.com). A community group to share accumulated knowledge of the entire Referee Corps. Only licensed officials and candidate referees may be part of this group; to join, go to the Google Groups page and search for the USRowing Referees, send a message to the group owner and ask for an invitation.

#### **Books**

**The Amateurs. 1985.** ISBN 0-14-08934-9. Pulitzer-prize-winning author David Halberstam looks at the training and competition leading to the selection of the 1984 Olympic men's single scull.

**Assault on Lake Casitas. 1990.** ISBN 1-879174-00-6. By Brad Lewis (who is featured in "The Amateurs"). This candid journal by a double-sculler (and Gold Medalist) for the U.S. Olympic team in 1984 is considered by many rowers the best inside look at the intense development of a world-class competitor.

**Mind Over Water, 1998.** By Craig Lamber. A view of rowing through the eyes of a Masters rower who came to the sport later in life.

**The Shell Game. 1982.** ISBN 0-688-00958-1. By Stephen Kiesling. An excellent account of varsity collegiate rowing.

**Drawn to the Rhythm. 2002.** ISBN 0-393-04940-X. By Sara Hall. Sara took up rowing in her 40s and within three years was a World Master's Champion. This is the first-person account of her experiences.

#### **Forms**

Forms and other publications are posted and available for downloading and reproduction in the Referee pages of the USRowing web site: [www.usrowing.org](http://www.usrowing.org)

