



OURCs Event and Safety Plan

Autumn Fours 2007

Introduction

Autumn Fours is an annual inter-collegiate competition which will be held on Sunday 28th October 2007. The competition will be run as a side by side knockout tournament: two crews will race alongside each other from the Longbridges boat house up to the bumps stone; the winner (judged by which boat's bow crosses the finish first) will progress to the next round. Racing will occur between 2pm and dusk.

In the event of a low number of entries the event may be run as a "round robin" competition where the winner will be the one with the most wins. In the event of a tie the winner will be the victor of the race between the tied boats.

There will be a separate men's and women's tournament.

This plan details the logistics of the event and the precautions taken to ensure smooth and safe running. Precautions are made based on a risk assessment which identifies possible hazards and resulting risks, highlights the controls in place to reduce the risks, and identifies those responsible for ensuring the controls are in place. This risk assessment is attached as an appendix of this safety plan.

Entry Restrictions

Entry will be restricted to "non-novice"¹ college crews and all entrants must hold a valid University Card. Novice coxswains will be allowed to enter but only if they have more than one term's experience. Entrants will also be required to have passed a swim test and entries will be checked against the OURCs swim test record. Competitors that have failed a swim test will not be allowed to compete even if wearing a life jacket. Honorary members of a boat club may enter but not associate members, without specific permission from the Race Secretary.

Entries per college may be limited due to time constraints.

¹ "Non-novice" crews is a definition essentially designed to eliminate beginner crews but not lower division college crews who have previous experience of racing.

Race Organisation

Management

The race will be organised by the Race Secretary (David Pallot) with help from the race committee. The following system of officials will be used:

The Senior Umpire (SU) – ensures the safe and timely start of all races.

The Race Secretary – mans the race desk with help from the race committee.

Marshals – work with the SU and Race Secretary to ensure the safe and smooth running of the event.

Race officials on the course will be identified by fluorescent yellow bibs and will be able to maintain contact through two-way radio. The race desk will be based at the Longbridges boat house and manned at all times. Mobile phones are held by the race desk (07855425015), Race Secretary (07811386155) and the Senior Umpire.

Consumption of alcohol by race officials is strictly prohibited.

Marshals

Marshals are all issued with high visibility yellow jackets, radios and starting orders. Personnel in key positions are also given megaphones as appropriate. All Marshals are given summary notes of specific duties where appropriate. A member of the race committee is always present at the race desk to ensure that Marshals are present and aware of their duties.

Marshals are responsible for ensuring that the race proceeds safely and that all river traffic, including race traffic, is in the right place and aware of where they are going. Before the start of each division, Marshals radio to the SU to confirm the course is clear of obstructions. A secondary role is to report to the Race Desk if any significant numbers of pedestrians are present, and to request support if appropriate. During the race itself they are observers, ensuring a safe and fair contest, they will also warn spectators and members of the public of approaching cyclists.

Marshals will be placed as shown in Appendix B. A short description of each position follows below (marshals marked with ▼ will have a megaphone).

1. Head (▼): Located approximately 50m beyond the finish post. Instructs crews to move off and spin in a timely and safe fashion. Performs river checks.
2. Finish: Judges the finish and informs race desk of which boat has won. Instructs crews to clear the finish line.
3. Boathouse: Located on the boathouse island. Performs checks on each boat to ensure that they conform to ARA and EA regulations. Performs river checks.
4. Boathouse marshals will liaise with the tow path side crossing marshal to allow boats wanting to land at OUBC to cross the racing line.
5. Crossing Point 1(▼) & 2 (▼): Located next to Christ Church Boat House and opposite on OUBC. Control crews crossing the racing line by liaising with each other and the SU.
6. OUBC: Located outside the old OUBC boathouse. Performs boat and river checks.
7. Longbridges: Located at the Longbridges boathouse. Performs boat and river checks.
8. Top Gut (▼): Located at the mouth of the gut. Pairs up racing crews and keeps note of boats that have passed downstream so as to inform the SU of the progress of crews ready to race. Instructs crews to move up onto start stations.
9. Bottom Gut: Located towards Donnington Bridge. Informs crews warming up of any changes to the schedule and ensures crews are in the start area and paired up in ample time.
10. Spare Marshal: If all other marshals present then Bike Marshal: Cycles ahead of each race warning anyone on the tow path about oncoming bikes. Able to cross to Falcon or City if crews are boating from there.

The Race Desk oversees the Marshals and assists the SU. Operational decisions on the deployment of additional Marshals will lie with the race committee and SU. The SU will be

situated on the start line at Longbridges.

A River Check is the process by which the SU can ascertain whether the river is clear of obstructions. The SU shall call for river checks by the Marshals before each division. The Marshals are instructed to look out for boats, swans and floating debris. The race will only be started by the SU when the course is clear of obstructions.

Rescue Boat Cover

A rescue launch will be based at the race desk during racing, equipped with a standard ARA rescue bag. At the discretion of the Senior Umpire and Race Secretary a second launch may be used to help marshal certain areas such as the crossing point. All launch drivers will hold the RYA Powerboat Level 2 qualification or above.

First Aid

Oxford University First Aid Unit (OUFAU) will provide first aid cover during racing. They will be based at Longbridges and will have access to the launch. First Aid kits are present in all boathouses and safety launches.

Emergency Access

Emergency access will be available to both the tow path and boat houses. The race desk will hold a key to the access road to the tow path and in the event of access being required to the boathouses, Christ Church lodge (01865 276 150) will be contacted to open the relevant gates.

Communications

A set of two-way radios are used for communication between race control and the Marshals, the stewards and the medical personnel. These are distributed as follows: 12 radios for the use of the race committee, including one each for the EA, the Iffley Lock Keeper, the safety boat, race control and the Senior Umpire, with the remainder for the use of other Marshals. Call signs are assigned according to position and are explained at the relevant marshalling and stewarding meetings.

In addition to radio communication, we will have the use of various mobile phones.

Circulation Pattern

Boat House Island

Crews based on the boat house island will boat from rafts at the downstream end of the boat house island to allow crews room to land. They will then be held at Christ Church raft by the crossing point marshal before being allowed to cross when the river is clear over to OUBC and down the Green Bank transit lane. On returning, crews will land on the upstream end of the boat house island.

OUBC Raft

Crews based at OUBC will boat and go straight into the Green Bank transit lane moving down straight into the gut. On returning from racing crews will progress down the transit lane to mid way down the boathouse island. Here they will receive instruction on when it is safe to cross from the boat house marshal.

Longbridges

Crews boating from Longbridges will proceed straight into the warm up area below the gut.

After racing crews will move down the boat house island transit lane and will cross at Christ Church raft. They will then go down the Green Bank transit lane and land at Longbridges.

Warming Up

Crews will warm up below the gut, only spinning to go downstream after checking with a marshal. The marshals will pair up crews just inside the gut and then call up the pairs when necessary towards the start stations.

Racing

Each crew will race up a buoyed lane from Longbridges to the finish stone. The two stations will be pre-assigned to each crew. "County station" being the station closest to the tow path and "City Station" being on the boat house side.

Potential Problems

Swans

During summer events, arrangements are made to have the swans on the Isis removed from the river for the duration of the races. This should not be an issue at this time of year as there are no swans on the Isis. Following the practise of head racing, crews may proceed up the course picking their own line, avoiding all obstacles, including wildlife.

Cyclists

Each crew will be limited to one accompanying bike which may follow alongside the crew to ensure safety rather than to coach. One extra cyclist may be permitted, with specific permission from the Race Secretary.

Other River Traffic

When Autumn Fours is held, there is little other river traffic, but occasionally other craft may appear on the river. As they reach either Iffley lock (going upstream) or Osney lock (going downstream) they are given directions from the EA. Craft are permitted on this stretch of the river only between races (races are never started until the river is completely clear of river traffic and other obstructions). Craft take the centre of the river and pass one another in accordance with the Regulations for Avoidance of Collisions. Crews stick to the sides of the river but in the event of a crew meeting a cruiser in mutual water, both crew and cruiser obey these Regulations. Craft proceeding along the course may be asked to moor at Long Bridges or the Finish between divisions.

Stream Conditions

In the event that the river is running faster or higher than usual, the SU liaises with the Iffley lock keeper, the boatmen and the EA to decide how to proceed. OURCs has developed a contingency plan to allow some racing to continue (detailed in the Risk Assessment). Options include requiring crews to race with experienced/senior coxes and cancelling the entire day's racing. The course may also be shortened to start from the downstream end of boathouse island and crews prohibited from going through the gut during warm up.

In the event of the EA displaying Amber or Red Boards at the local locks (indicating a strong or rising stream), it is understood that the EA must be consulted and their recommendations adhered to.

Lightning

In the event of an official sighting lightning, the guidance provided by the ARA will be followed. The weather will be monitored by the Race Desk and a decision on the suspension of racing will be made by the Senior Umpire in conjunction with the Race Secretary. The location of the storm will be approximated by counting the time between the thunder and the lightning and if this is 30 seconds or less, then competitors and officials will be advised to take proper shelter as soon as possible (i.e. within buildings and away from boats/trees).