



OURCs Event and Safety Plan - Summer Eights 2008

Introduction

Eights is a rowing event held Wednesday to Saturday of 5th week in Trinity term, with qualifying races (Rowing On) held the preceding Friday. This year Eights will occur from the 21st May to 24th May with Rowing On held on the 16th May 2008.

Racing occurs with the first division at 12 noon and the last at 6.45pm. On Saturday the first division is at 11am and the last at 5:45pm. The course is upstream within the stretch from Iffley Lock to Folly Bridge. Racing is split into 13 divisions, each of 13 boats, racing at approximately 35 minute intervals. The aim of racing is to catch up with the boat in front and gain a “bump”. On gaining a bump, crews move out of the way and cease racing. Boats losing a bump also move out of the way and cease racing. Other boats must continue racing until the finish line.

The race is run by the OURCs committee, using the following system of officials:

Race Secretary - coordinates racing and is responsible for event and race safety;

Senior Umpire (SU - wearing a yellow bib) - ensures the safe and timely start of the races;

Race committee - help the race secretary with coordination of racing and event safety;

Marshals - (wearing yellow bibs) work with the Race Secretary and the SU to ensure the safe and smooth running of the event;

(Junior) Umpires - (wearing red numbered bibs) act as impartial race observers.

The consumption of alcohol by officials is strictly prohibited.

This plan details the logistics of the event and the precautions taken to ensure smooth and safe running. Precautions are made based on a “Bumps Racing Risk Assessment” document which identifies all 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 *Appendix A* of this safety plan.

Rowing On (qualifying)

This is a timed race from Long Bridges to Christ Church meadow. The event is run as a processional race, with crews set off at regular intervals in divisions (subject to entry levels), between 1pm and 6pm. The fastest crews covering the course then qualify for Eights proper. The circulation pattern and marshalling arrangements are the same as for Eights but without a warm up (crews are

encouraged to warm up on land before racing). For this short course event, one safety boat is used, available for use by the first aid personnel.

Race Management

The Race Secretary (David Pallot) is responsible for the implementation of the Event and Safety Plan, assisted by members of the Eights Race Committee, and advised by the Area Safety Officer (Sport). The Secretary, or other Race Committee member, will be present at the Race Desk at all times, and can be contacted on the Secretary's mobile phone (07527071415) or by two-way radio. The Race desk will be situated at Longbridges.

Marshals

Marshals are all issued with high visibility yellow jackets, radios and starting orders. Personnel in key positions are also given klaxons and megaphones as appropriate. Senior marshals from each college shall attend a briefing meeting, held in the week prior to the event, that covers individual marshalling duties and safety procedures, and will be given summary notes of specific duties where appropriate. These senior marshals are then responsible for briefing the marshals sent by their college. A member of the Race Committee member will always be present at the Race Desk to ensure that marshals are in place 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, marshals act as observers, ensuring a safe and fair contest. They will also warn spectators and members of the public of approaching cyclists, although this role will primarily be taken by the Bike Marshal during the main event.

Each marshal has particular duties dependent on their designated position on the river bank, detailed below. These positions are indicated on the Placement of Marshals map, attached as *Appendix B* to this plan.

1. Head (of the River) Marshal ▼: Warns and communicates with other river traffic to prevent obstructions on the course; instructs crews who have finished racing on when to spin and where to wait to prevent a build up of crews by the finish line; warns pedestrians that an event is occurring. As suggested by the EA, we will try to make sure a very competent and confident marshal is in this position to ensure good communication with any river traffic.
2. Finish: Operates the finish clacker to inform crews when their stern has crossed the finish line (i.e. that they have finished racing); keeps record of who crosses the line; instructs crews to clear the finish line; performs River Checks.
3. Boathouses A: Fields questions from competitors; Performs checks on each boat to ensure that they conform to ARA and EA regulations; Encourages crews to boat on time to avoid delays.
4. Boathouses B ▼: Fields questions from competitors; performs boat checks as above. Encourages crews to boat on time to avoid delays.
5. Univ: Fields questions from competitors; performs boat checks as above. Encourages crews to boat on time to avoid delays.

6. Green Bank: Observes racing; warns pedestrians that an event is occurring.
7. Longbridges: Performs boat checks as above. Encourages crews to boat on time to avoid delays.
8. Top Gut ▼: Keeps a record of which boats have passed downstream to be able to inform the SU of the progress of crews to the start.
9. Bottom Gut ▼: Keeps a record of which boats have passed downstream to be able to inform the SU of the progress of crews to the start.
10. Top Bunglines ▼: Keeps a record of which crews are attached to their bunglines; assists the SU.
11. Bottom Bunglines ▼: Keeps a record of which crews are attached to their bunglines; assists the SU; warns and instructs other river traffic to prevent obstructions on the course.
12. Bike Marshal: Cycles ahead of each division with the sole aim of providing additional warning to spectators and members of the general public on the towpath if significant numbers of pedestrians and bystanders are present.

(▼ indicates that the marshal has a megaphone; all marshals have klaxons)

All these marshals except the bike marshals have klaxons and perform river checks (see later) in order of their position downstream from the head (as listed here). It is the responsibility of the Race Secretary or his deputy on Racedesk to deploy additional marshals as may be necessary.

The Race Desk, situated at Long Bridges, oversees the marshals and assists the SU. Operational decisions on the deployment of additional marshals will lie with the race committee and the SU. The SU will be situated in the area of the bunglines.

A River Check is the process by which the SU can ascertain whether the river is clear of obstructions. The SU will frequently call for river checks by the marshals, and will always do so immediately prior to the start of a race. 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.

In the event of a race collision which blocks the racing line to following crews, attending marshals will sound the safety klaxons and radio to all the others to do the same. A division must also be klaxoned in the event of someone being in the water (either a member of public, or competitor ejected from a boat). As crews hear the klaxons they will stop racing immediately as instructed in the coxing meetings (see later section).

Circulation Pattern

To ensure the safety of river traffic and the smooth running of Eights, a strict circulation pattern is enforced, which is the usual competition pattern. This is illustrated on the Circulation Pattern map, attached as *Appendix B* to this plan.

In the following explanatory notes, left and right refers to the course of the boat as seen by the coxswain, i.e. port (strokeside) and starboard (bowside) respectively.

Crews:

The basic circulation pattern between divisions is a figure of eight. Above the Gut all crews observe reverse circulation thus keeping to the left of the river. Below the Gut, the normal pattern is followed and crews keep to the right. Crews may only overtake below the gut if it does not obstruct cruisers. All crews boating from the Boathouse Island must therefore boat downstream and keep close to the left bank. Crews on the County Side must boat upstream towards the Head. Any crew stationed at

Falcon or City of Oxford Rowing Club should boat as normal, unless the river is completely clear - crews may then boat downstream. Similarly, if crews are late boating at Long Bridges, the river is clear and permission has been gained from a marshal, crews may boat downstream.

Of the 13 crews in each division, the top 6 will warm-up in the upstream part of the river and the bottom 6 in the part below the gut. Boat number 7 may choose its warm-up stretch. The change from left to right hand circulation happens at the top entrance to the Gut as crews move down toward the start, under direction of the Long Bridges and Top Gut marshals. The bungline marshals assist crews with spinning onto their bunglines; either reverse or normal spin is allowed with the aim of leaving the far bank clear if cruisers are passing.

Upstream of the Gut, encounters between crews are avoided by all crews keeping tight to the banks and leaving a clear, central passage for cruisers and other river traffic. Downstream of Long Bridges, crews obey the Regulations for the Avoidance of Collisions (Thames Navigation Licensing and General Byelaws 1993). Crews may spin above the gut where appropriate provided it does not cause obstruction to oncoming river traffic.

During the race, no vessels other than the 13 racing boats and the following safety launch are on the course. Crews may take whichever route up the river they choose. In the event of a 'bump', the crew gaining the bump moves out of the racing line as quickly as possible and stops. The launch follows racing as far as the Gut. Crews who have been 'bumped' or have not gained a 'bump' race as far as the finish post, opposite Christ Church meadow. Crews then wind down and move upstream, clear of the finish, where they wait for instructions on spinning from the Head marshal. Crews who 'bump out' follow the last racing crew up the river, observing the circulation pattern. Crews that 'bump out' beyond their boathouse join the warm-up circulation pattern and land at their raft when they pass it on the correct side of the river. Crews 'bumping out' before their boathouse may go straight in provided it is clear to do so and under instructions from the marshals, with the exception of the top half of the Boathouse Island side, St. Anne's to Keble, who must re-join the circulation pattern.

Crews for the next division may boat when the last racing crew passes their raft, as announced by the PA system.

Other River Traffic

During Eights other craft may frequently appear on the river. As they reach either Iffley lock (going upstream) or Osney lock (going downstream) they are given verbal notice from the EA. (Races are never started until the river is completely clear of river traffic and other obstructions). Marshals are responsible to speaking to other river users and keeping the SU notified of their appearance on the course.

On the stretch upstream of Long Bridges, craft take the centre of the river and pass one another in accordance with the Regulations for Avoidance of Collisions. Crews stay tight to the banks of the river but in the event of a crew meeting a cruiser in mutual water, both crew and cruiser obey these Regulations. The Circulation Pattern shows the positions of three points, labelled A, B and C. These may be used as places for craft to wait temporarily if it is the case that waiting for them to clear the course will delay the next race excessively. The locations of these points are marked on the Circulation Pattern map, attached as *Appendix B* to this plan.

Swans

During summer events, arrangements are made to have the swans on the Isis removed from the river for the duration of the races. The safety launches may also be used to help move swans clear of the racing line.

Communications

Two separate sets of two-way radios are used for communication between race control, the marshals and the medical personnel. These are distributed as follows:

SET A: 16 radios for the use of the race committee, including one each for the EA, the Iffley Lock Keeper, the 2 safety boats, the First Aid unit, the Race Desk and the Senior Umpire, with the remainder for the use of other marshals.

SET B: OUFAU radios, provided and distributed by themselves.

Call signs are assigned according to position and are explained at the relevant marshalling meeting, and on the day at the Race Desk.

On Saturday an additional set of radios is used by the static umpires to report to the head umpire.

In addition to radio communication, OURCs has the use of mobile phones held by: Race Desk (Secretary's Mobile 07527071415), the Senior Umpire and First Aid. The Iffley lock keeper also has a land line (01865 777277). An emergency (999 calls only) telephone is located in the back of the Longbridges Boathouse at the Race Desk. The phone number of Christ Church Lodge (01865 276150) will be kept at the race desk to secure emergency access to the meadow. The number of the EA person on duty on each day of racing should be obtained by the Race Secretary.

A public address system based at the Race Desk (Long Bridges) can address all competitors and spectators from Christ Church Meadow to Donnington Bridge.

Safety

Competitor Safety

Event Management

Marshals are thoroughly briefed prior to the event at a meeting for all marshals taking part (to be organised by the OURCs Secretary), and also on the day, on their duties (as described above) by members of the Race Committee and on the advice of a Senior Umpire. The SU is responsible for ensuring that racing starts only when conditions are safe, subject to satisfactory reports from the marshals and Race Desk. If any incident occurs that could potentially jeopardise the safety of crews, Marshals sound marine air horns (klaxons), bringing all racing to an immediate halt.

All participating crews shall observe the OURCs rules, which encompass the safety advice of the Amateur Rowing Association (ARA) and EA regulations. Clubs that have not submitted a safety audit may not race. Crews infringing these rules or acting in an unsafe manner may be subject to fines, penalty bumps, or disqualification from the event.

Coxes of all crews must attend a briefing meeting (to be organised by the OURCs Captain of Coxes) covering the event and safety management issues covered in this document. If any cox does not attend, they will not be permitted to compete unless given express permission by the OURCs Captain of Coxes. The meeting will be split into two parts: the first (approximately 15 minutes) for all coxes, covering essential safety information; and a second section, for coxes new to Bumps racing, or for those wanting a refresher, to cover all aspects of coxing in the event. In addition, at

least one Senior Committee member from each college boat club must attend the first section of the meeting, ideally the Captain, to ensure that information is circulated throughout the club.

In addition, an Eights briefing meeting will be held (to be organised by the OURCs Secretary) before the Captains' Meeting. This meeting is for anyone involved in Eights: coaches, coxes, club officials and competitors, and will go over all the important safety aspects, rules of racing, marshalling, umpiring, as well as information on appeals made to, and penalties imposed by the Race Committee. A question and answer section is included in this meeting, where the OURCs Secretary, Sabbatical Officer and Race Committee will be able to advise on any issues raised.

Particular attention is paid to rules covering the use of life jackets, bow balls and heel restraints.

Stream Conditions

In the event that the river is running faster or higher than usual, the SU liaises with the Iffley lock keeper and the EA (who attend all 4 days of the event) to decide how to proceed. OURCs has developed a contingency plan to allow some racing to continue (included in the risk assessment attached). Options include moving the start positions (bunglines) further away from the lock, cancelling racing for less experienced crews, requiring crews to race with experienced/senior coxes, running part divisions and cancelling the entire day's racing.

Lightning

All marshals and race officials will be responsible for watching out for lightning and if it is seen it will be reported to the race desk. The race desk will then approximate the distance of the storm by using the "30 – 30" rule (comparing the time difference between lightning and thunder). If the storm is felt to be within approximately 10km (30 seconds between lightning and thunder) then crews will be taken off the water as soon as possible and advised to seek proper shelter in the boathouses.

Once all crews have returned to their boat houses, a river check will be co-ordinated by the race desk. If all crews have returned to their rafts then the marshals will be advised to seek shelter. Launches will return to the nearest raft and the drivers should seek shelter in the nearest boat house. The public address system will be used to warn spectators and other competitors.

Following the suspension of racing, racing will only resume 30 minutes after the last lightning. This will be announced over the PA system.

Medical Emergency

First Aid

First Aid cover is supplied by the Oxford University First Aid Unit (OUFAU), who are based at Long Bridges. One safety boat is supplied for their use. In the case of a serious incident, access to Christ Church meadow and Long Bridges for emergency vehicles is arranged in advance: a key to the slip road from Donnington Bridge is held at racedesk, and access to Christ Church meadow will be arranged for emergency services. The race committee are to be briefed before the event by the race secretary on procedure during an emergency and plans will be kept at racedesk for guidance during an incident.

Safety Boats

Two powerboats are used by OURCs during the 4-day event. Each boat is driven at all times by qualified personnel (RYA level 2, or equivalent). The boats have distinct roles: SB1 ("Race Following Launch"): stationed at Falcon Rowing Club, available to follow racing to Long Bridges and is ready to aid participants.

SB2 ("First Aid Launch"): stationed at Long Bridges, for the use of the First Aid team.

Spectator and Bystander Safety

The handling of spectator safety will rest with the marshals. As well as reporting to the SU on the state of the river prior to racing, marshals will also report on numbers of pedestrians to the Race Desk. Pedestrians will be warned of oncoming races by stationary marshals (in addition to the Bike Marshal), the use of clear signs at entry points onto the towpath, and by the use of a Public Announcement system which covers the course between Donnington Bridge and Christ Church Meadow. Announcements will be made 5 minutes and 1 minute before each division, and during racing as appropriate, warning pedestrians to watch out for bikes. The use of extra marshals in warning bystanders, will rest with the Race Desk. In the event of unsafe or disruptive behaviour by spectators, marshals will report to the Race Desk, who may postpone the start of a division or contact the Police as appropriate.

Numbers of cyclists accompanying divisions will be strictly controlled. Each boat shall be accompanied by an umpire (numbered red bibs) and a coach (blue or green bib) only, with sanctions being applied to clubs that disobey this rule. Marshals shall be responsible for reporting unsafe behaviour of accompanying cyclists, who may be identified from their bib numbers. Captains will be made aware that they are responsible for the conduct of their coaches, and sanctions will be employed in the case of dangerous or inappropriate behaviour.

First aid provision is available to spectators as well as competitors.

On Saturday, competitors will not be allowed to use bicycles on the tow path. Strict penalties will be used for crews followed by cyclists. Novice coxswains that would normally require a bank rider may go without one due to the marshalling and with the previous three days experience coxing. If captains are concerned about their coxes they should contact the OURCs Captain of Coxes. Umpiring on Saturday will be done by a series of static umpires stood along the course that report through to a head umpire from the OURCs Race Committee via radio.