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Summer Eights Umpiring Guide

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Introduction

Umpires are the impartial observers who witness the races and report what they see. On weekdays this is by following one crew each along the towpath, then returning to Race Desk and reporting what you see to the Race Committee member who debriefs you. From these reports, the Race Committee decides the outcome of the race. On Saturday, because no bikes are allowed on the towpath due to the large number of spectators, teams of static umpires are positioned along the towpath to oversee what happens in a particular stretch of the river. These umpires then report to the Head Umpire (NOT the same as the Senior Umpire, who oversees the safe running of the event), who decides the outcome of the race.

Please arrive promptly at Longbridges Boathouse for the start of your umpiring shift and report to Race Desk. Do not wait for someone to approach you. You will be asked for your mobile number; this is so that, in the instance of an appeal, Race Desk can contact you to ask for further clarification. You will be briefed by a member of the Race Committee and sent off to the bunglines (weekdays) or to your static position (Saturday).

Please wear some obvious college kit so we can identify your college.

If you are umpiring on a weekday, you must bring a bike and you are advised to wear a helmet.

You should also be familiar with the Summer Eights rules of racing.

On weekdays

Before the race: For each division you will be assigned a crew. Neither your assigned boat nor the boats ahead or behind should be from your own college or any college you have an affiliation to. Declare any such affiliation or any other link before you are sent out as if this is only realised later, it will undermine your impartiality, and hence the reliability of your report.

You will be given a red umpiring bib with the number of the bungline of your assigned crew printed on it. Do not leave Longbridges until you are wearing this.

You should be at your crew's bungline before the five minute gun. If your crew has problems (e.g. equipment failure) report it to the nearest marshal, who will be wearing a yellow bib, or the Senior Umpire, who will also be wearing a yellow bib and be located by the cannon near the middle of the bunglines.

During the race: When racing starts, follow and observe your crew. Throughout the race you must make sure that you have a good view of the crew you are following. If this means asking the coach of the crew to get out of your way you need to do that. Ultimately it is in their interest for you to see whether a bump occurs or not. The trickiest zones are just as the crew leaves the Gut, where the towpath leaves the racing line, and coming past Univ Boathouse, where a lot of people will be standing on the rafts. In these places do what you can to maintain a line of sight to your crew.

You will need to have an idea of how the racing is panning out to know which end of the boat to look at. If the crew is coming up for a bump move to the bow of the boat. Likewise, if a crew is gaining from behind you will need to drop back to the stern. The trickiest scenario for an umpire is when three boats converge. In this situation, you will have to look at both ends of the boat to see if the crew you are following bumps or is bumped. Sometimes there will be contact at both ends, in which case you need to work out in your mind which happened first.

Do not interfere with racing except in the interests of safety.

After the race: Once your crew ceases racing (gains a bump, bumped or **stern** crosses the finish line), immediately report back to Race Desk for debrief, whatever the outcome.

On Saturday

Before the race: The river is split up into sections, and each section has an umpiring team, made up of Blue, Green and Red Umpires. All umpiring positions are marked on the ground with a box and number in yellow spray paint. Each umpire will have a report book in which they can make notes of what they see during racing. As on weekdays, umpires should be in position when the five minute gun goes off.

During racing: Watch the section of the river directly in front of you and note down what you see occurring in it in the report book. Do not follow an exciting piece of racing into the next section or look down the river to see how a crew you are interested in is doing.

After the race: When the last racing crew has rowed out of your section of the river the Green and Blue Umpires should go to their Red counterpart to allow them to give a report directly to the Head Umpire via the radio. Each umpire should give an individual report. Often three conflicting reports are more useful than a combined report.

Shifts: Each college is assigned a position for a certain length of time (often the whole day). It is up for the individual colleges to organise how they split the shifts but no-one should be in position for less than two hours. Any changeovers should take place just after the previous umpire has provided their report to the Head Umpire and the Head Umpire must be informed of, and expressly give their permission for, the changeover.

What you are looking for

On all four days it is important that you report what **YOU** see, not what the coach or your fellow umpires tell you happened. So do not discuss events with coaches, spectators or particularly other umpires, even after debrief/reporting (in case the results are contested and you need to be interviewed by a member of the Race Committee).

You will be asked questions/must make notes about the following:

Things you MUST report on:

- If the cox was NOT holding the bungline when the start gun went off.
- Whether bumps have occurred (judging this is clearly the main reason why umpires are there). A bump is gained in three ways:
 - Direct contact between boats/blades of the bumping crew with the boats/blades/crew of the bumped crew.
 - Concession by the bumped cox (raising their arm).
 - The bumping boat rows clean past (stern past bow) the bumped boat.
- The sequence of bumps where three boats are close together (who bumped whom first).
- Where these events occur.

It should be recognised that some bumps could be hard to spot, especially if they happen on the other side of the river and are the faintest of contact. In particular, giving the sequence of bumps in a three-way contact is notoriously difficult, given that you will at best be looking at the bow of one boat and the stern of another, and will therefore be hard-pressed to watch the other end of the boat in the middle. Don't feel that you have to say confidently one way or the other if you are not sure. It is fine to say that you think there was contact, but are not absolutely positive. In this situation, the debriefer/Head Umpire would go to another umpire who should also have seen the incident. It is better to do this than to try to guess.

In the instance of a collision after a concession:

- Was the concession given early and clearly enough?
- Did the bumping crew wind down quickly enough after the concession? Ask yourself whether the following cox was able to see the concession; if the bumping crew was directly behind the bumped crew then this might have been difficult. Also bear in mind that sometimes a crew that has just been bumped gives up and so slows down. This can

erroneously make it look as if the following crew is at fault. Only report a late wind-down if you are absolutely convinced that the following crew was to blame for the contact.

In the instance of a crew that has bumped out being hit by a crew following it:

- Did the crew that bumped out get out of the way to the best of their ability?
- Did the cox of the crew behind make a reasonable attempt to steer around the obstruction? Bear in mind that the following crew does not have the right to follow the racing line; if there is room to deviate and get round, they must do this. If they do not, and they hit another crew and get impeded, it is their own fault.

Special instances:

- If a crew was only bumped because of “unavoidable external influences”, usually being impeded by another crew, usually one which has bumped out, but not cleared out of the way sufficiently or quickly enough, then the Race Committee can award a technical row-over.
- If a crew was bumped, but only after having eased, mistakenly thinking that they had in fact bumped, then again the Race Committee can award a technical row-over. (Here you will be asked as to whether you think there was a “reasonable misapprehension”, the stress being on ‘reasonable’.)
- If a klaxon is fired all racing at every point on the river ceases. So if you hear a klaxon, any contact you see afterwards cannot stand as a bump, even if both crews involved still thought they were racing, or you deem the bump was inevitable. Bumps gained before the klaxon was fired stand. If you think a crew was slow to wind down after a klaxon was fired, which you believe to have been audible to them, report them.

It is important for you to remember that a lot of these decisions are by their nature subjective. Use your own judgement to answer any questions along these lines. In these instances, there are the fall-backs of other umpires and of an appeal by the crew involved, so your decision won't be condemning anyone.

Summer Eights Rules

The following is a short summary of the rules of racing in Summer Eights:

- The objective is to catch (“bump”) the crew in front of you. A bump occurs when:
 - Any part of one boat touches the boat in front.
 - The cox of the leading crew acknowledges that a bump is inevitable by raising his/her arm.
 - The leading boat is overtaken completely by the following boat (stern of the latter past bow of the former).
- On gaining a bump, a boat is no longer racing and so not liable to be bumped. It must clear the racing line so as to not impede crews behind still racing.
- A crew that has been bumped is also no longer racing and not liable to be bumped and must clear the racing line so as to not impede crews behind still racing. Note the difference to Torpids rules where the bumped crew keeps racing and can be bumped multiple times.
- In the event of a klaxon sounding on the course, all boats must cease racing.
 - Bumps prior to the klaxon stand; bumps after the klaxon do not count.
 - This is independent of whether the crews themselves hear the klaxon.