

Oxford University Rowing Clubs

Event And Safety Plan

Isis Winter League 2016-17



O U R C s

Introduction

The Isis Winter League is a series of races held each academic year in order to provide regular competition for colleges. Ordinarily this is held as 2 races in Michaelmas Term and 3 in Hilary Term on Sunday afternoons. In some years, one of the Hilary races is dropped. With the large number of novice events, and potential loss of our largest winter event, Torpids, due to strong stream conditions, it is hoped that these races will help provide further focus for crews, aiding retention of in particular senior oarsmen and women. The ability to train coxes and OURCs Marshals is expected to aid the smooth running of Bumps Races.

This academic year, five races will be held, subject to conditions, on the following dates:

- A. Sunday 30th October (4th Week Michaelmas Term)
- B. Sunday 27th November (8th Week Michaelmas Term)
- C. Sunday 22nd January (2nd Week Hilary Term)
- D. Sunday 5th February (4th Week Hilary Term)
- E. Sunday 19th February (6th Week Hilary Term)

In the event of cancellation of a number of events over the winter (usually due to unsafe weather conditions), there will be a 6th date set aside as a contingency, this date is Sunday 7th May (3rd Week Trinity Term). The decision to run this event will happen at least 6 weeks before (26th March), and will be made by the OURCs committee in conjunction with the Senior Umpires.

With the agreement of the University insurers, non-college clubs will be eligible to row. Racing will occur from 1pm until approximately 5pm. The race course is upstream within the stretch from Iffley Lock to Folly Bridge. Racing is split into divisions of about 6-18 boats, racing at approximately 30 minute intervals. Division size and intervals are to be decided by consultation with the Senior Umpire.

The race is a Head Race: boats are set off one at a time with roughly 20 seconds between each boat, and each boat rows the full length of the course. The aim of racing is to row the length of the course in the fastest possible time, measured by two timers at the start and finish respectively. Competitors are subject to additional entry requirements in the interest of safety as specified by the race committee.

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

- **Race Secretary** – coordinates racing and is responsible for the overall

organisation of the event, consulting with the Senior Umpire about safety matters and logistical changes which affect race timings.

- **Race Committee** - help the Race Secretary with the coordination of racing and event safety.
- **Race Desk** - Located at Longbridges Boat House, will oversee the marshals and assists the Senior Umpire. A Race Committee member, usually the Race Secretary, will be present at Race Desk at all times. They can be contacted by mobile phone or by two-way radio
- **Senior Umpire** (SU, wearing a yellow jacket) – with the committee, they ensure the safe and timely start of the races;
- **Marshals** – (wearing yellow bibs) work with race secretary and SU to ensure the safe and smooth running of the event. Details of their individual roles are given below.
- **Timers** - act as impartial race observers at the Start and Finish lines and record the time each crew passes their position.

The consumption of alcohol by officials is strictly prohibited.

Race Secretary

The Race Secretary is the event organiser and has overall responsibility for the safe running of the event, in accordance with the event plan. The event plan does not restrict the Race Secretary from halting racing at any time or from making necessary alterations to ensure the safety of competitors, organisers and members of the public.

The Race Secretary, as event organiser, should appoint each and every Senior Umpire and member of Race Committee. Regardless of the process of election that occurs within the University of Oxford structure, the Race Secretary may exclude any individual from being a race official, and is expected to manage the officials, removing them from individual tasks if necessary. The Race Secretary shall inform other river groups of the event.

The Race Secretary is responsible for coordinating racing and so should direct members of race committee; tasking them as needed and as appropriate. The Race Secretary may delegate responsibilities as is appropriate. The Race Secretary consults with the SU about issues and risk mitigation affecting the safe running of the races. The Race Secretary should seek contact details for the EA for the day of the race.

Senior Umpire

Senior Umpires are appointed by the Race Secretary, and are selected from the general ratified pool of SU's (as ratified by the captains of OURCs), or from the ratified pool of IWL-only SU's (also ratified by the captains of OURCs). The Race Secretary ensures that those appointed have the necessary skill and experience to conduct their duties. Given the nature of the event, there is no formal qualification appropriate to the task, but the existing team of Senior Umpires will make sure sufficient new members are recruited to cover the job, and will ensure that new

recruits are fully briefed and trained in the role.

The principal duty of the Senior Umpire is to ensure that each race is safe to start, and then to start that race in a safe fashion under the OURCs rules of racing. To this end, the Senior Umpire on duty will conduct river checks as appropriate, using the marshals to report any traffic on the river or any obstruction in the river. The SU will conduct a full river check at least once before each race begins and repeat at their discretion sufficiently to ensure that they are satisfied the river is clear to start the race. The SU will consider the following (below) when starting each race, and will relate it to the nature of head racing and the quality and competence of the crews involved, as far as is reasonably practicable:

- The local stream conditions
- The local weather conditions
- Whether the race course is suitably clear of racing traffic, non-racing traffic, debris or any other obstruction
- Whether the safety launch(es) and first aiders are in a suitable position and ready to respond
- Whether sufficient marshals are in place and in communication with the SU and race desk, to provide full coverage of the course

The SU has the full operational responsibility of starting racing, and so will try to start each division in a timely fashion in accordance with the rules of racing, where circumstances and safety allow. Any other party (including but not limited to the Race Secretary, the Environment Agency, and the University) that believes that there is a good reason not to start a race, should be encouraged to inform the SU immediately. The SU may halt racing on the grounds of safety and recommend any mitigating action to the Race Secretary that might allow racing to continue.

The first Senior Umpire of the day has responsibility for checking and approving the river as sufficiently safe to open to crews for their warm-up, at a point approximately half an hour before the first division. If at any point in the day the SU considers the river to be unsafe even for warmingup crews, s/he will close the river to student traffic and suspend racing. Before opening the river, the first SU of the day will be satisfied that:

- Sufficient marshals are in place and providing full coverage of the stretch with working twoway radios.
- The stream conditions are sufficiently safe.
- The weather conditions are sufficiently safe.
- First Aid cover is available at the river.
- Any non-racing traffic already on the stretch has been spoken to and is aware of the event and circulation pattern.
- The race secretary and his/her team are ready and happy that the river be opened.

In the same manner, the final SU of the day will close the river at the end of racing, will dismiss the marshals (in stages) once they are satisfied that all racing traffic is

clear of the relevant areas, and will reopen the river to non-racing circulation.

As part of the preparations for the event, the coordinating SU for the team will liaise with the Environment Agency, the Rowing Sabbatical Officer (in his/her safety role), and the Race Secretary, to determine any special measures to be taken to allow racing under the risk assessment in more challenging conditions such as high stream or wind. These measures may include, but are not limited to: restrictions on coxing status; restrictions on racing divisions; use of smaller divisions; changes in the intervals between divisions; and provision of extra safety launches.

The SU will ensure that the decisions are agreed with the Race Secretary and will communicate them in a timely fashion to the racing clubs. The Rowing Sabbatical Officer will ensure that other interested parties (such as the Proctors and/or Sports Federation) are kept informed of the measures being used, as far as necessary, and that information on the measures is available to all college boat club members, including Senior Members.

Marshals

All marshals are issued with a High Visibility jacket, a two-way radio and a copy of the starting order. Marshals in key positions are also given megaphones as appropriate. Marshals will be provided with summary notes of specific duties for their marshalling position where appropriate.

All marshals shall be briefed prior to the start of their duties by a member of the Race Committee. The brief will cover individual duties and safety procedures. 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 the Senior Umpire will ask certain marshals (outlined below) to confirm that the course is clear of any obstructions that may impact racing. Marshals should report to Race Desk if any significant number of pedestrians or bystanders are present, and to request support if appropriate.

During the race itself the marshals are observers, ensuring a safe and fair contest, they will also warn any bystanders or members of the public of approaching cyclists, although this duty may be taken by a Bike Marshal if present.

In the event of the river being blocked to imminent oncoming crews during racing the marshals will sound their safety klaxons to halt racing and radio for all others to do the same. A division should also be klaxoned in the event that someone has fallen in the water where they may be in danger from racing crews, or if First Aid is immediately required to be transported via safety launch to attend to an incident.

Crews hearing a klaxon will stop racing immediately, and listen carefully for further instructions from the marshals, giving way to the safety launches.

Positions and individual duties

Key: ▼ - Marshal has a Megaphone † - Marshal performs river checks with the SU

1. Head ▼†: Approximately 50m upstream of the finish line. Instructs crews to move upstream to clear the finish line and instructs crews when to spin; Communicates with other river traffic entering the course.
2. Finish ▼†: At the finish (between the upstream end of Boat House Island and the Cox Stone) Instructs crews to clear the finish line; informs crews that they have completed the race course.
3. Boathouses A †: Upstream half of Boat House Island. Performs checks on each boat to ensure that they conform to BR and EA regulations.
4. Boathouses B †: Downstream half of Boat House Island. Performs checks on each boat to ensure that they conform to BR and EA regulations; monitors river traffic emerging from the Cherwell cut.
5. Univ †: Outside University College Boat House Performs checks on each boat to ensure that they conform to BR and EA regulations.
6. [optional] Greenbanks †: Approximately mid-way between Univ and Longbridges. Monitors that crews are keeping to the circulation pattern; checks for river traffic emerging from the Cherwell Cut.
7. Longbridges †: Outside Longbridges Boat House. Performs checks on each boat to ensure that they conform to BR and EA regulations.
8. Top Gut ▼†: Mouth of the gut. Keeps a record of which boats have passed downstream so as to inform the SU of the progress of crews to the start.
9. Bottom Gut ▼†: Downstream end of the gut. Monitors that crews are keeping to the correct circulation pattern.
10. [optional] Donnington Bridge †: On the non-towpath side, roams between Falcon Raft and City of Oxford Rowing Club Raft as required. Performs checks on each boat to ensure that they conform to BR and EA regulations; Communicates with other river users in the area.
11. Start #1: Upstream section of the marshalling area. Assists the SU marshalling crews before the start
12. Start #2 ▼: Downstream section of the marshalling area. Assists the SU marshalling crews before the start; warns and informs other river traffic of the circulation pattern to prevent obstruction of the course.
13. [optional] Bike Marshal: Cycles ahead of each division Provides early warning to bystanders and the general public on the towpath of the upcoming race.

The Race Desk oversees the Marshals and assists the SU. Operational decision on the deployment of additional Marshals will lie with the Race Committee and the SU.

The Senior Umpire will be situated a short distance below the designated start line.

A River Check is the process by which the SU can ascertain whether the river is clear of obstructions. The SU shall call for a River Check by the Marshalls (marked †) before each division. The Marshals are instructed to look out for and report boats, swans and floating debris. The race will only be started by the SU when he/she is satisfied that the course is suitably clear of obstructions.

Circulation Pattern

To ensure the safety of river traffic and the smooth running of the event, a strict non-

racing circulation pattern is enforced. In the following explanatory notes, left and right refer to the course as seen by a coxswain, i.e. port (strokeside) and starboard (bowside) respectively.

Crews

Warm up circulation - crews boating upstream of the Gut

Boat with bow-balls pointing downstream, keeping close to the bank from which they boated down to the entrance of the Gut. (Longbridges crews should proceed directly through the Gut.) When they get to the Top Gut marshal they should cross if necessary to the towpath side (bowside bank) when it is safe to do so. They should proceed through the gut staying on the towpath side and then join the circulation pattern for crews boating from below the Gut. Crews must not overtake while traversing the Gut.

Warm up circulation - crews boating downstream of the Gut

Boat with bows pointing upstream. Crews from the Isis Boathouse should cross to the non-towpath side (their bowside bank). Crews from CORC and Falcon rafts should proceed upstream and spin in the area upstream of the Falcon raft. After they have spun, when it is safe to do so, they should cross to the towpath bank and proceed keeping right of centre (to their bowside bank).

Crews may spin in either direction when it is safe to do so, and under the direction of the SU or a start marshal. Marshalling crews will be asked to keep tucked into a particular bank, as instructed by the SU and start marshals. Crews will be started by the Senior Umpire, and marshalling should move up towards the Senior umpire as each crew is set off.

Racing crews

During the race crews may take whatever line across the course that they wish, avoiding obstructions. Slower crews should not obstruct faster crews, but faster crews must overtake safely without expecting the slower crew to give way. As they cross the finish line they should wind down and move to the towpath side and proceed upstream well clear of the finish line under the instruction of the Finish and Head marshal to make room for other crews. Crews should not spin until told to do so by the Finish marshal.

Return Circulation - crews landing on Boat House Island.

Crews returning to Boat House Island should stay on the non-towpath side and land downstream without doing any further laps.

Return Circulation - crews landing at Univ and Longbridges

Crews returning to Univ and Longbridges should cross to the towpath side immediately downstream of the finish line, and then proceed along the towpath bank to land downstream without doing any further laps. If there is a strong stream at Longbridges, then crews landing at Longbridges may spin upstream of their raft, and drift back to land.

Return circulation - crews landing below the Gut

Crews returning to boathouses downstream of the Gut should cross to the towpath

side immediately downstream of the finish line. They should proceed through the Gut and then land in normal training circulation.

Other River Traffic

During the period in which the Isis Winter League is held, there is little other river traffic, but occasionally other craft may appear in the river. As they approach the course there are warning signs posted, and they are informed of the circulation pattern by the head and start marshals.

The race is never started if other craft will obstruct the course. Craft are asked to proceed through the centre channel in between divisions 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 Longbridges, near the Isis Farmhouse, or near the Finish if a division is about to begin.

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 generally no swans on the Isis. Following the practice of head racing, crews may proceed up the course picking their own line, avoiding all obstacles, including wildlife.

Communications

Two-way radios are used for communication between race control, the marshals and the medical personnel (who also use their own communication equipment).

These are distributed as follows: A minimum of 13 radios for use by the marshals, plus one for each of: the Environment Agency, each Safety Boat, Race Desk, and the Senior Umpire. Call signs are assigned according to position, and are explained at the marshalling briefings.

In addition to radio communications, we have the use of a mobile phone held by Race Desk, the number will be published to competitors at least 1 week before the event, the Iffley lock keeper has a land-line (01865 777277) and the Christ Church Lodge is available if access to the meadow is required (01865 276150).

Enquiries can be dealt with by the Race Secretary via the Race Desk number, or by the Rowing Sabbatical (Tom Coles) who is available on 07917643030.

Safety

Competitor Safety

Event Management

Marshals are thoroughly briefed prior to the event 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. On hearing a klaxon over the radios or anywhere on the course, all marshals sound their klaxons.

Clubs that have not submitted a safety audit to the BR may not race. Crews infringing OURCs rules or acting in an unsafe manner may be subject to fines, or disqualification from the event. Information for competitors will be published before the event, detailing the safety issues. Coxes of all crews will be OURCs registered unless exempted by the Captain of Coxes (non-OURCs clubs only).

Particular attention is paid to rules covering the use of life jackets, bow balls and heel restraints. and other safety equipment in the risk assessment.

Bank Riders

Novice coxes must have a bank rider unless exempted by the Senior Umpire or Captain of Coxes. Other coxes may choose to or not. Coxless boats should use discretion based on the experience of the steersman and stream conditions whether to use a bank rider or not, although it is recommended that a bank rider is present.

Stream Conditions

In the event that the river is running faster or higher than usual, the SU liaises with people including the Iffley lock keeper, the race secretary, 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 but are not limited to moving the start positions further away from the lock, cancelling racing for less experienced crews, requiring crews to race with experienced/senior coxes, running smaller divisions and cancelling the entire day's racing.

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 a lightning storm, all racing will cease and competitors instructed to take suitable cover at the first available moment. The fastest way of achieving this might be to complete a division if racing is about to begin. Racing may be continued or cancelled at the discretion of the Senior Umpire in conjunction with the Race Secretary.

Medical Emergency

First Aid

First aid cover for the event will be provided by a minimum of two first aiders. First aiders will be qualified with the HSE approved First Aid at Work or equivalent qualification. First aid cover will have first aid response as their sole responsibility and will have full access to the facilities of race desk, including safety launches, for the purposes of best providing cover or best responding to an emergency. First aiders will be informed through their agents of the nature of the event and have the risk assessment made available to them. All first aiders engaged are done so on the basis of their qualification and professed skill. They are required to hold liability insurance of their own, or through their employer. They are responsible from when the SU declares the river open for racing until the SU has declared the river open for non-racing circulation at the end of the day.

First Aid kits are present in all boathouses and safety launches.

The designated point to transfer a casualty to an ambulance is at City of Oxford Rowing Club. In case this is not possible, access to Christ Church meadow and Longbridges for emergency vehicles is arranged in advance: a key to the slip road from Donnington Bridge is kept at the Race Desk, and barriers normally preventing access to Christ Church Meadow are lowered by arrangement. The emergency services will be made aware of the event and access will be communicated to them beforehand. If a casualty who is a member of the University is taken to hospital, an official of the college (chosen under advice from the SU) will be contacted.

Safety Boats

At least one powerboat is used by OURCs during the event. Each boat is driven at all times by qualified personnel (RYA level 2, or equivalent). At least one boat will be used to give First Aid the quickest possible access to an incident. This may be the boat used to follow the race, depending on conditions and the choice of the First Aid Unit.

All launch drivers to be qualified to RYA level 2 or equivalent (e.g. BSAC).

Bystander Safety

Due to the very low number of bystanders expected, the handling of their 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. Marshals and the use of clear signs at entry points onto the towpath will warn pedestrians of oncoming races. 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. One coach only shall accompany each boat, with sanctions being applied to clubs that disobey this rule. Cyclists must not interfere with the public enjoyment of the public right of way. Occasional permission may be granted for an additional cyclist to accompany a crew by a Race Committee member or the SU - for example to assist in training a novice cox.

Marshals shall be responsible for reporting unsafe behaviour of accompanying

cyclists. 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.

In the event of an accident, Marshals will report to the Race desk, which will take appropriate action.

Crews will be reminded by e-mail before the event of the need for accompanying cyclists to give way to pedestrians and make safety a priority.

End of Event

At the end of racing the race committee should prioritise announcing the times of the days racing. These times should be posted on the OURCs website within 24 hours of the end of racing. The Senior Umpire and the Race Secretary will have a short debrief after each event with the aim of promoting the smooth running of future events.