



2026 Coastal Rules of Racing

Part 13 of the 2026 Rules of Racing



Notes and Context

- This presentation focuses on key rules as they relate to umpires' roles in a regatta.
- It does not include topics that relate solely to organizing committees or that are less relevant or do not relate to information required for Level 2 umpires to know for umpiring a coastal regatta (e.g. detailed race-course characteristics).
- Because coastal rowing is relatively new and many Umpires have not umpired at many regattas, this presentation also provides an overview of all relevant updated coastal rules, not just the changes in the 2026 rules.



Structure

- Former Coastal Rowing and Beach Sprints Appendices consolidated into a new Part 13 of the Rules of Racing with three sections:
 - Coastal Rowing General
 - Coastal Endurance Regattas
 - Beach Sprints Regattas
- Umpires can now review a consolidated set of rules depending on the type of regatta they are umpiring



Coastal Rowing General

Section 13.1.0



Coastal Rowing General

- **Coastal Endurance regatta:**

- Rowers compete in coastal rowing boats, and the course is on the open sea or a large inland body of water

- **Beach Sprints regatta:**

- Rowers compete in coastal rowing boats, and the course involves three stages (a run on the beach at the start, a rowing sprint around fixed markers in the water, and a run on the beach at the finish)

Note: Application of coastal rules is together with, not in exclusion of, the general Rules of Racing



New Requirement: Safety and Health of Rowers

- Competitors are responsible for their own health and fitness (must be able to swim 50m and keep their head above water unassisted for 3 minutes)
- Enforcement or certification that rowers meet the requirement is a responsibility of the Organizing Committee

Note: Any Jury member can prohibit a crew from going on the water if they consider the crew to be a danger to themselves or others



Role of the Chief Umpire

- In addition to existing duties of the Chief Umpire, a CU's role during unsafe conditions is further clarified for coastal:
 - In the case of unsafe conditions, the Chief Umpire is empowered to take any necessary decisions and communicate any required changes to the Starter and the Umpires on the course.
 - If the Regatta Chair and Chief Umpire disagree on any issue regarding safety, the decision of the Chief Umpire prevails
- The Chief Umpire also determines which turning marks are key turning markers (those with increased risk of severe interference between crews).



Coastal Endurance (CE) Regattas

Section 13.2.0



Boat Classes

- Solo (C1x)
- Double Sculls (C2x)
- Coxed Quadruple Sculls (C4x+)
- Coxed Four (C4+)

Coastal Endurance Juries



- Chief Umpire
- Starter and Judge at the Start
- Race Umpire
- Penalty Umpire
 - Monitors and records the penalties awarded by the Starter, Race Umpire(s), and Key Turning Mark Umpire(s), informs the crew(s), and enforces the penalty requirement (penalty loops, penalty turns, or penalty box)
- Key Turning Mark Umpire(s)
 - Monitors key turns (defined as “a point of increased risk of severe interference between crews due to factors such as, for example but not limited to, the angle of the turn and/or its proximity to the start.
- Judges at the Finish
- Control Commission

Note: There is a minimum of 4 umpires on a jury for a Coastal Endurance regatta, plus 1 umpire for each key turning mark.



Floating Starts

- Boat finds its own position on the start line but must not interfere with other boats.
- Umpires should not give alignment instructions to crews unless the Judge at the Start determines there are too many crews over the Start Line
 - If this occurs, the Starter decides whether or not to delay the Start or give sanctions.

Visual example:



Image from: <https://plus.britishrowing.org/2021/08/02/coastal-rowing-can-be-challenging-due-to-the-weather-and-rough-waters-but-this-makes-it-more-fun/>



Floating Start Procedure

Crews are not allowed to be on the course-side of the Start Line when the start signal is given.

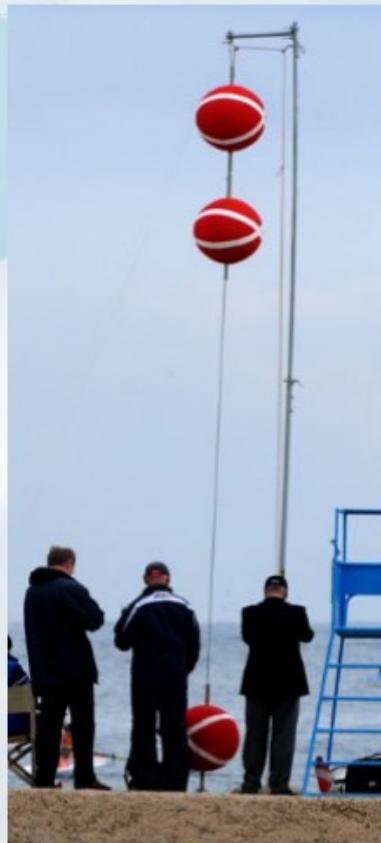
- **3-minute signal:** Starter hoists 3 balls (min. 50cm) clearly visible from the Start Line in the air **and** sounds 3 clear, short blasts of the horn.
- **2-minute signal:** Starter drops one ball **and** sounds 2 clear, short blasts of the horn.
- **1-minute signal:** Starter drops one ball **and** sounds 1 clear, short blast of the horn.
- **Start time:** Starter drops the final ball **and** sounds one long, distinct blast of the horn.



Start procedure in pictures



3 Minutes



2 Minutes



1 Minute



Start

Image from <https://worldrowing.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2025-Online-Clinic-Coastal.pdf>



Beach Starts

- All boats line up on the beach close to the water.
- When directed to do so, crews put their boats on the water (at the water's edge) floating ~8m apart.
- Crews stand in the water next to their boats but cannot start to board (or have any part of their torso or legs in the boat) before the Start signal is given.
- Crews' responsibility to avoid interference.
- Official start time is when the flag starts to drop.

Visual example before entering the water:



Image from: <https://plus.britishrowing.org/2025/07/14/navigating-a-coastal-endurance-course/>

Beach Start Procedure



- **Pre-Start:**

- Starter gives 5, 4, and 3-minute calls.
- Crews must be at their start positions and under control of the Starter at least two minutes before the start time (or can be sanctioned or have race start without them)

- **Two Minutes:**

- Starter announces “Two Minutes!”
- At any point after this, says “Move to the Water!”
- Crews are now under Starter’s orders and the Starter may start the race at any time.

- **Start Time:**

- Making sure they are visible to all crews, Starter says “Attention!”
- After a clear pause, raises the red flag.
- After another pause, Starter drops the red flag quickly to one side and simultaneously sounds a horn in one long distinct blast.

Umpire Roles at the Start



Starter:

- Conducts start sequence
- Determines if race should start on time or sanctions should be awarded (e.g. if too many boats are on the course-side of the line or many crews are late to the start through reasons beyond their control)
- Positioned approximately 50 -100 meters behind the centre line of the Start with a clear view of all boats and so starting signals can be seen by all crews at the Start

Judge at the Start:

- Positioned exactly on the line of the Start in a position to clearly see all boats on the Start line.
- Identifies boats with a false start and notifies Starter and Umpires of applicable decision (e.g. mass false start = stop and restart the race; individual false start = 2-minute penalty)



Boat Handlers

- Boat handlers may assist the crew by giving verbal and visual steering assistance. However:
 - Cannot use any “electric, electronic or other device” to give verbal or audio instructions
 - Cannot use any technical or artificial visual aids other than their uniform clothing (e.g. no extra-large gloves, paddles, etc.)
 - Cannot run with the crew member to the finish line.

Note: Umpires need to ensure that boat handlers follow these requirements.



Delays at the Start

- If a race is delayed, Starter informs the crews and then:
 - **Floating Start:**
 - Starter lowers all signals and begins 3-minute countdown again for the new start time
 - **Beach Start:**
 - Starter ensures crews are in place and begins start procedure for the new start time.
 - If the delay is less than 2 minutes **and** if boats have already moved to the water, Starter can just begin with “Attention!” (does not need to make the 2-minute call again).

False Starts (Floating Starts)



- Judge at the Start is the only one to determine a false start.
- **Individual False Start:**
 - Occurs when the Judge at the Start can identify all the crews that committed the false start (can be more than one crew)
 - Race continues; each crew committing the false start is awarded a 2-minute time penalty
 - Judge at the Start notifies the Starter of the crews receiving the penalty; if possible, a single ball should be raised to indicate one or more crews have received a false start
- **Mass False Start:**
 - Occurs when many crews commit the false start so the Judge at the Start *cannot identify* all the crews that caused it
 - Race is stopped (Starter raises a red flag and sounds repeated short blasts on the horn)
 - Race is started again without penalties being awarded
 - Race can continue if the mass false start caused by external influences (e.g. weather) **and** the Judge at the Start considers the start was fair.



False Starts (Beach Starts)

- Judge at the Start is the only one to determine a false start.
- For any false start, the Starter does not stop the race.
- Any crew committing a false start is awarded a 2-minute time penalty.



Interference

- A crew causes interference to another crew if it:
 - a) changes course to prevent another crew from passing it
 - b) does not give way when required, or
 - c) causes a collision with another crew by not giving way as required.
- A member of the Jury who observes the interference may impose an appropriate penalty on the crew committing interference



Severe Collision

- **Definition:** Interference by a crew to another crew through actual contact between the boats or the rowers with any part of the boat or oars, resulting in:
 - a) Injury to any rower;
 - b) Damage to the other boat;
 - c) A rower or coxswain in the other boat being struck by the blades of the offending boat;
 - d) A rower or coxswain being ejected from either boat by the force of the collision (addition);
 - e) The other boat being forced off the race course,
 - f) The other boat missing a turning marker;
 - g) The other boat colliding with an obstacle.
- A member of the Jury can award a Red Card to the crew (used to be a 60-second penalty) if a severe collision is considered to be deliberate or particularly dangerous.
- There is no right of objection or protest to a penalty given for interference



Turning Markers

- Crews are allowed to touch turning markers with their boat or oars, but the keel of the boat must pass around the designated side of the turning marker.
- Crews must avoid interference or severe collisions with other crews and observe rules for overtaking.



Finish of the Race

Floating Finish:

- A crew has finished the race when the bow of its boat reached the finish line between the two finish line marks.
- All crew members must be in the boat from when the crew starts to row at the Start and at the Finish of the race.

Beach Finish:

- A crew has finished the race when one member of the crew (the runner) has completed the action required for the type of finish (reached the line or touched the flag or pressed the button on the beach).
- All crew members must be in the boat from when the crew starts to row at the Start and when arriving at the beach.



Finish of the Race (cont'd)

- **Crew responsibilities** (if not followed, crew will not be ranked and result shown will be DNF):
 - Responsible for their safe arrival on the beach, including keeping boat under control in an upright position and ensure all crew members and equipment are safe in the event of capsizing
 - Ensure beach landings are clear of other crews' boats
 - Follow the instruction of officials on landing
 - Responsible for the safe and quick removal of their boat from the area of the beach designated for landing
- Crews are ranked in order of the bows of their boat reaching the finish line (water finish) or their runner finishing the race (beach finish), adjusted to take account of any time penalties.
- The time of each crew is measured to 1/10th of a second
- The Umpire must indicate the conclusion of the race by raising a white flag (or otherwise confirming the result).



Dead Heats

- **For preliminary rounds:**
 - If not sufficient space for two crews in a dead heat to progress to the next round, it is now the Chief Umpire (not the Regatta Chair) who conducts the random draw to determine which crew will progress.
- **Procedure for dead heats in a final:**
 - Crews given equal placing in the final order and next position is left vacant
 - Additional medals provided if this occurs with medal positions



Penalties

- Penalty options no longer include penalty loop and penalty turn: now limited (in addition to options in the Rules of Racing) to crews spending time in a Penalty Box.
 - If a penalty box is not available, the penalty is added to the crew's finish time.
- When a penalty is given, the Umpire notifies the Penalty Umpire and, if possible, notifies the crew that a Time Penalty has been awarded by announcing to the crew (for example):
 - "Boat 001 - Ontario 01 - Interference - Penalty Box - 1 minute"
- If the Umpire can't notify the crew, or if the crew doesn't hear them, the crew must still serve the penalty and cannot object, protest or appeal, as long as the Penalty Umpire is informed and notifies the crew when they reach the penalty area.
- A crew not completing a time penalty fully will be excluded.
- A crew that has been interfered may be allowed to proceed to the next round of an event (if applicable) if a Jury member considers the crew would have advanced if not interfered with.

Penalty Box Procedure: On Water



- Penalty Umpire notifies the crew by announcing (for example) “Crew (name), Penalty Box, 1 minute!”
- Crew enters the penalty box, stops rowing, and holds their boat inside the penalty box.
- Crew is timed from the time the entire boat is within the penalty box
- When the time expires, the Penalty Umpire announces “Crew (name), GO!”
- Crew exits, ensuring they do not interfere with another crew, and finishes the race.
- The Penalty Umpire should record the actual time the crew first passes them and when the crew returns to the course.

Penalty Box (Floating Finish): Area outside the line of racing between the last buoy and the finish line.



Penalty Box Procedure: Beach

- **Beach finish penalty box:** Established on the beach between the disembarkation point and the finish line
- Penalty Umpire notifies the crew by announcing (for example) “Crew (name), Penalty Box, 1 minute!”
 - Crew name and time to be spent in the penalty box is also displayed on a board visible to the runner of the penalized crew.
- Runner enters the penalty box.
- Runner is timed from the time they enter the penalty box.
- When the time expires, the Penalty Umpire announces “Crew (name), GO!”
- Runner exits and finishes the race.

Penalty Box (Beach Finish):
Established on the beach
between the disembarkation
point and the finish line



Objections, Protests, and Appeals

- Regular Rules of Racing procedures followed **except** there is no right of objection, protest, or appeal regarding interference or a Jury member's decision regarding penalties for interference.
- Interfered-with crews may be allowed to progress to the next round of an event (as applicable) if the Board of the Jury considers that the crew would have progressed except for the interference.



Beach Sprints Regattas

Section 13.3.0



Boat Classes

- Solo (C1x)
- Double Sculls (C2x)
- Coxed Quadruple Sculls (C4x+)



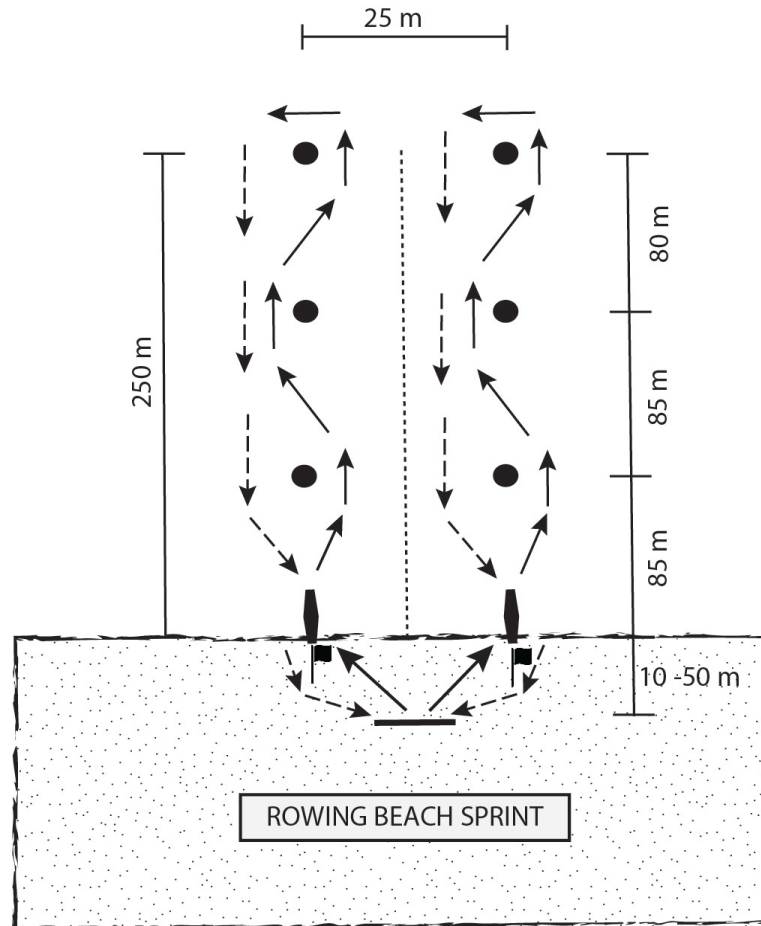
Race Format

- Two options for race format:
 - **Side-by-side racing:**
 - Results determined by finish order
 - **Processional racing (New)**
 - Results determined by time taken to complete the course after time penalties applied.
 - May be used for preliminary rounds or when Chief Umpire determines adverse conditions reduce the time available for racing.

Side-by-Side Racing



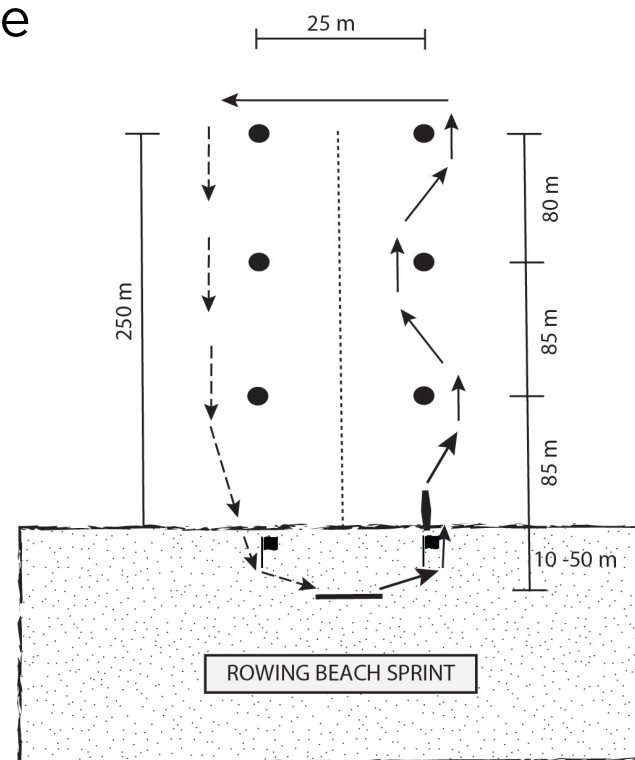
- Only option now is “slalom out/straight back” (no more “slalom out/slalom back” option)



Processional Racing



- Similar to time trial format: All crews race using the same lane starting one after another at prescribed intervals.
- Intervals should be 30 seconds (can be longer if pool boats are used, due to availability).
- Crews:
 - Race on the outside of the entire course
 - Must go around each buoy in the correct order and direction
 - Must not interfere with other crews
 - Must move aside if being overtaken





Composition of the Jury

- Chief Umpire
- Starter
- Judge at the Start
- Race Umpire
- Lane Umpires (1 per lane)
- Turning Mark Umpire
- Judge at the Finish
- Challenge Umpire (New)
- Members of the Control Commission (one is the senior member)

Note: Umpires may have dual roles



Control Commission

- In addition to regular duties, must also check the correct display of boat registration numbers and that crews race in the boats allocated to them.

Starter and Judge at the Start



- Should be in a position to see the start/finish line **and** the racing course and can be clearly seen by all crews.
- With flags, Starter should be positioned in front of the runners so they can clearly see the start flag.
- Judge at the Start determines a false start, but for Beach Sprints, takes the advice of the Lane Umpire if a false start or faulty start* is caused by a crew member who is not the runner.
- Can be the same person if positioning allows.

* Faulty start = when boats not correctly in line when the start signal is given



Race Umpire

- Must have a clear view of all crews during the race
- Has precedence over Lane Umpires and Turning Mark Umpire
- Ensures proper conduct of the race and safety of the rowers, imposes penalties as applicable
- Does not give steering directions to crews
- Indicates if the race was in order by raising a white flag (or not in order by raising a red flag) once all crews have finished the race



Lane Umpires

- One per lane
- Positioned on the beach (elevated as necessary), in line with assigned lane
- Ensure boats are held in line with their lane while waiting for the start signal
- Notify Judge at the Start if there is a non-runner false start (a crew member starts to board the boat before the start signal is given) or faulty start
 - Notification made by raising a red flag and sounding a horn



Turning Mark Umpire

- Position required or not based on decision of the Chief Umpire
- Stationed in a boat at the farthest point of the course
- Observes the race and determines whether all crews go around all buoys correctly as required
- Raises a flag for the Race Umpire once all crews have rounded the furthest buoy from the beach (white if crew rounded all buoys correctly; red if not all buoys rounded correctly or there was another infringement of the rules)



Judge at the Finish

- Determines the order in which the runners finish the race
- Determines if the race was in order
- Validates the results



Challenges (New)

- Beach Sprints don't have objections, protests, or appeals; they only have Challenges.
- Each crew has only one Challenge allowed throughout their event.
- A rower or crew receiving a penalty or challenging the official results of a race can lodge a Challenge.
- Must be no later than 5 minutes after the later of:
 - The finish of the relevant race, **or**
 - The time the penalty is awarded
 - (In the case of a Challenge against the result, from the time the results of the race concerned are published)

Challenge Procedure



- Crew member must raise their hand and advise the Race Umpire they are making a Challenge.
- Challenge is adjudicated by a Challenge Panel.
- Panel decides if the Challenge has merit.
 - If so:
 - Panel accepts the Challenge, considers the case, and issues a decision.
 - Panel notifies the crew concerned and the other crews in the event before the next round of racing begins (or before medals are awarded in the case of Finals A and B).
 - Decision and reasons will be confirmed in writing if requested by the challenging crew.
 - If not:
 - It may reject that Challenge without explanation other than to say that it is without merit.
- Decision of a Challenge Panel is final (no appeals).
- A crew that has used its Challenge is only allowed to keep their right to challenge if their original Challenge is successful.



Challenge Umpire and Panel

- Challenge Umpire accepts challenges from crews, collects relevant materials and submits the challenge to the Challenge Panel.
- Challenge Panel is the Beach Sprints version of the Board of the Jury:
 - Composed of three RCA L2 Umpires, including the Chief Umpire or their designate.
 - Alternate umpire is used if a member of the Panel is involved in the dispute leading to the Challenge



Final Eight Crews (New)

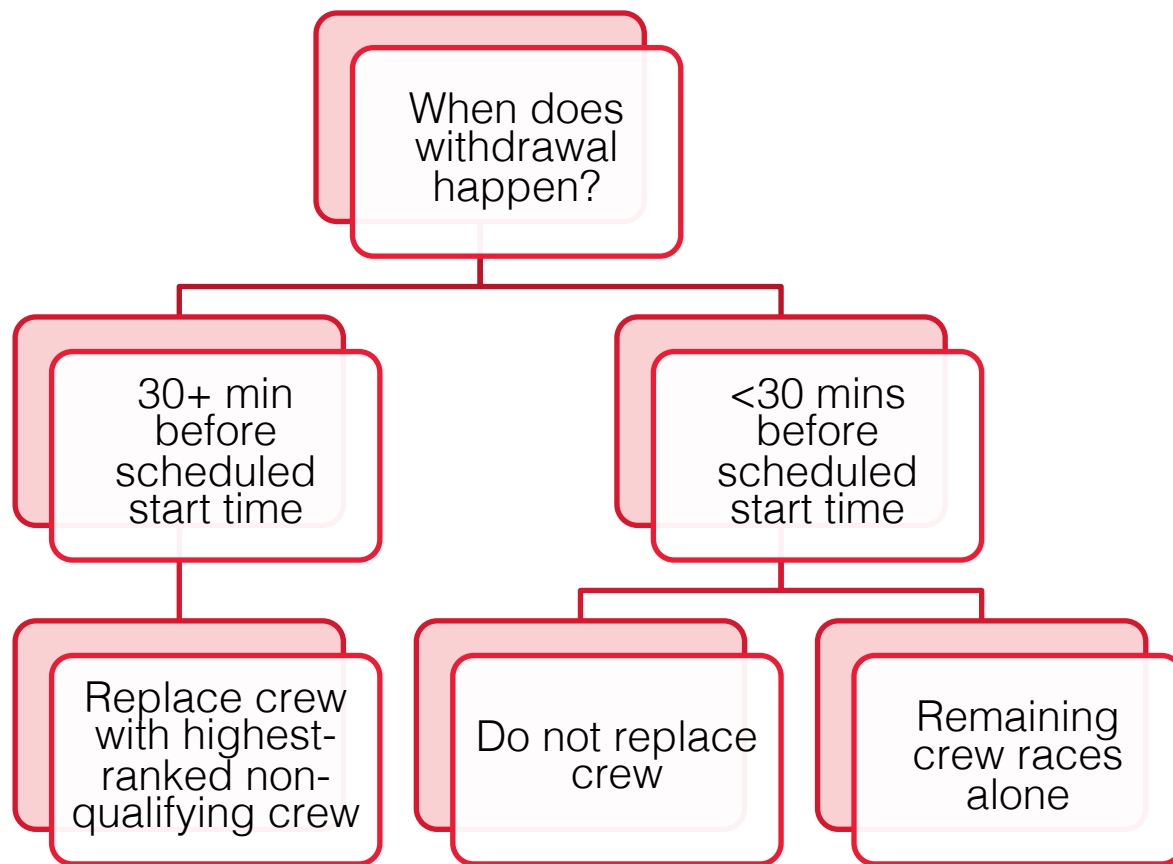
- Once Final Eight racing has begun, crews must be ready to race at the scheduled start time of their race.
- If a crew isn't ready, they will be deemed to have withdrawn and their result will show DNS, even if it's for illness or injury.
 - Crew ranked last in the round.
 - If the withdrawal is in the quarterfinals, switch that crew with the next highest-ranked crew.
 - The withdrawing crew is then ranked in the original position of the replacement crew that replaced the withdrawn crew in the quarterfinal round.

Crew Lane Selection (New)



- Crews are allowed to select their preferred lane after the first round of racing:
 - Minimum 10 minutes before scheduled start time of the first race in the next round of an event, all crews indicate their preferred lane for that round to a designated official.
 - The crew's selection for quarterfinals will also apply to semifinal and final rounds.
- Lane choice priority:
 - Priority goes to crews that progress directly from Round 1 to Round 3.
 - Otherwise, the crew with the faster time in its previous round gets their lane choice.
 - If both crews have the same time in the previous round, a random draw will be conducted to determine which crew gets their lane choice.
- If the priority crew hasn't indicated a preferred lane as required above, the non-priority crew receives its preferred lane.
- Once the lane assignments have been completed, the designated official notifies crews and the timing and results officials to prepare the start list.

Withdrawals, Exclusions, Disqualifications Involving Final Eight Rounds (**New**)





Re-rows (New)

- If the Race Umpire decides there should be a re-row of a race, it is over the full course.
- A re-row takes place immediately or when the Umpire (in consultation with the Chief Umpire) decides.

Boat Handlers



- When there are two or more boat handlers, at least one must identify as a man and one must identify as a woman.
- Boat handlers may assist the crew by giving verbal and visual steering assistance. However, they:
 - Cannot use any “electric, electronic or other device” to give verbal or audio instructions
 - Cannot use any technical or artificial visual aids other than their uniform clothing (e.g. no extra-large gloves, paddles, etc.)
 - Are responsible for swift removal of the boat after a runner disembarks to ensure it does not obstruct other crews
 - Cannot run to the finish line with the crew member or help the crew member to do so

The Runner (New Details)



- While running, runners cannot receive any physical guidance or assistance from any team member, including boat handlers.
- Except for Inclusion events that include one PR3 Para rower, the Start and Finish runners for all Mixed events must be two different runners (one identifies as a man, and one who identifies as a woman).
- For W4x+ events, all runners must identify as women.
- The starting runner can run straight to the boat once the start signal is given (they do not have to run around the outside of the flag placed at the water's edge marking their lane) except in Processional Time Trials, where the starting runner **must** pass on the outside of the flag.



Crew Members (New)

- All crew members must be in the start area (in racing uniform) and under the control of the Starter three minutes before the start time.
- If not, may receive a Yellow Card, or the race may be started without them.

Start Procedure



- **Pre-Start:**
 - Starter gives 3-minute call.
 - Announcer introduces crews to the spectators.
 - Once introductions complete, crews move immediately to their start positions.
- **One Minute:**
 - Starter announces “One Minute!”
 - Runners stand behind the start line.
 - Starter announces “Put the Boats on the Water!”
 - Crews and/or boat handlers immediately put the boats on the water ready for the start.
- **20-30 Seconds Before the Start:**
 - Starter announces “Get Ready!”
- **0-20 Second Until Scheduled Start Time:**
 - Music volume is lowered.
 - Starter says “Attention!”
 - After a clear pause, raises the red flag (or presses a button to change lights from neutral to red)
 - After a clear and variable pause, Starter drops the red flag quickly to one side and simultaneously sounds a horn in one long distinct blast OR changes the red light to green with an audible signal through loudspeakers.
 - Timing of the race is started.



A Start with Flags



Image from: <https://www.rowontario.ca/weekend-preview-beach-sprints-head-to-st-catharines/>



False Starts

- A crew commits a false start if:
 - Both feet of the crew's nominated runner are not behind the start line when the start signal is given **OR**
 - If any crew member starts to board their boat or if any part of any rower's torso or legs are in or on the boat before the start signal is given.
- Yellow Card for first false start and a Red Card for two false starts.
- However, for processional time trials, the Judge at the Start may allow the crew to continue and award a 10-second time penalty to the crew that caused the false start.

Responsibility of the Rowers



- Crews using pool boats must compete with the standard rigging (30-second penalty otherwise).
- Crews must correctly round all turning buoys in the correct direction and must complete the full course; boat or oars can touch buoys, but the keel of the boat must pass around the designated side of the buoy.
 - 30-second penalty for not correctly rounding each slalom buoy missed
 - 1-minute penalty for failing to round the turning mark buoy
- For coxed boats, the coxswain is required to be in the boat for the whole time the crew is rowing (or crew receives a DNF)
- Crews are responsible for their safe arrival on the beach, including keeping boat under control in an upright position and ensuring all crew members and equipment are safe in the event of capsizing
- Safety and awareness of weather and other safety issues is a priority: umpires may penalize or exclude crews rowing in a dangerous or out-of-control manner.



Interference

- Penalty options for interference:
 - Exclusion
 - Time penalty of up to 60 seconds
 - Or other appropriate measures

Note: Time penalty increased from 10 seconds



Timing

- Finish times now recorded to 1/100th of a second for Beach Sprints, not 1/10th of a second.
- Race is concluded when the Umpire raises a white flag (or equivalent confirmation).
- Results determined by finish order unless a time penalty has been awarded, in which case the adjustments to time are used.
- Any technical failure of equipment does not invalidate the finish of a crew as long as they have completed their required actions and the Finish Judge believes the finish order is clear.



Dead Heats

- **Preliminary Rounds:**
 - Races are re-rowed unless both boats would progress anyway, in which case random draw determines relative positions in the next round.
- **Final Eight:**
 - Times in the latest previous round used to determine ranking.
- **Finals:**
 - Crews are given equal placing and next placing is left vacant.
 - Additional medals given if applicable.



Penalties

- Beach Sprints-specific penalty (in addition to options in the Rules of Racing):
 - Time penalty added to a crew's elapsed race time and is taken into account for final placings



**ROWING
CANADA
AVIRON**

ROWINGCANADA.ORG