



Newcastle University Boat Club

Tyne Single Scullers Head – 9th September 2023

Safety Plan as issued at 29-07-23

This document should be read in conjunction with the standard competition Risk Assessment and its 'Actions to address risks' and numbered references in this document refer to those actions.

1. Introduction

The competition is being organised by Newcastle University Boat Club; contact names are given in Section 2. On the day, the competition will be run from Tyne Amateur Rowing Club at Water Row, Newburn, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE15 8NL.

The course is 3.5km approx (with about 500m further at either end for marshalling) and is shown on the accompanying course map. The waters are within the jurisdiction of the Port of Tyne and authorisation is necessary and is being sought on the basis of this and other documents. The river will not be closed to other traffic, but this will be very limited.

The competition is for single scullers, pairs, and double sculls in fine boats only, and will be run in four divisions. All ages from J13 upwards, and all experience levels beyond absolute beginners will be invited to enter. It is not yet proposed to invite athletes with disabilities, but it is hoped to do so in future years.

The location and length of course, the extent of safety cover, and other provisions in the competition welfare plan recognise that young (down to J13) and/ or relatively novice crews may be entering. The organising committee will ensure that in the case of seriously adverse conditions, such rowers will not be allowed to row, even if already at the club. If already on the water, they will be given extra supervision on the water until back at the host club.

Each division will be run as a separate time trial, as changes in tidal flow do not allow times to be aggregated. The races will be run under the Rules of Racing with local rules limited to specific hazards, notably Newburn Bridge.

The race committee reserve the right to shorten the course at any point during the competition, if it is deemed necessary; this will be communicated to all competitors and volunteers prior to the start of the division.

2. Competition organisation structure

Organised by:	Newcastle University Boat Club	
Organising Committee:		
	Name	Email
Chairman	Alex Leigh	alex.leigh@ncl.ac.uk
Chair Race Committee	John Mulholland	john.rrsa@jdmulholland.plus.com
Competition Secretary	Katherine Bulmer	Katherine.frances.bulmer@outlook.co
Competition Water Safety Adviser	Jennifer Peacock	Jenp425@gmail.com
Competition Welfare Officers	Aoife Chapman	A.chapman1@newcastle.ac.uk
	Sashank Viswanathan Prema	s.viswanathan-prema2@newcastle.ac.uk

Race Committee:		
Chair Race Committee	John Mulholland	john.rrsa@jdmulholland.plus.com
Umpire/ Chief Timekeeper	Paul McCarron	paul.mccarron@tiscali.co.uk
Umpire	Richard Mortimer	nruc-chair@nerowing.com
Umpire	Colin Percy	colinwpercy@gmail.com

3. Planning and preparation

Authorisation is required from the Port of Tyne (PoT) and will be sought in good time. They require copies of key safety documents and details of insurance. River closure will not be requested, as commercial traffic is minimal, and other potential users will all be notified in advance. Emergency services are informed as appropriate to the modest scale of the competition. Insurance cover is supplied through British Rowing on its standard competition policy through affiliation.

Other river users on this stretch of the Tyne will be informed in advance, with particular emphasis on other rowing clubs, but also others such as Newburn Water Ski Club who operate close by. Rights of way pass through the various club sites at Newburn and warning notices will be put out on the day warning of activity. Bookings for externally provided launch safety cover and first aid will be booked early and confirmed in place a week before.

Careful management of entries is important in minimising the risk of having too many crews on the water. A safety limit per division will be imposed at 100 boats per division. Entries will be suspended by division as limits are reached.

In drawing up the start order for each division, care is taken to order crews as far as possible in speed order, fastest first, to minimise the need for overtaking (although the river is broad enough for this not to be a major problem). In addition, short breaks will be introduced in the start order within divisions to further reduce need for overtaking

The overall course map, instructions to crews, access and parking instructions, and details of safety briefings will be issued/ published when the competition is first advertised; detailed circulation patterns at start and finish will be issued in the week before the competition, when numbers and likely weather conditions are known.

The home club will ensure that resources related to safety are available in-house, on loan or bought in, notably marshalling launches, loudhailers, radios and timing equipment; all to be checked as working prior to race day. The organising committee will prepare a task rota for volunteer helpers from the home club and otherwise and fully filled out by the Wednesday before the competition. Priority will be given as necessary to tasks directly related to safety.

Assistance will be sought from neighbouring clubs in good time if there are insufficient resources at the home club. Volunteers named for key roles, notably launch drivers and water-based marshals, will be assessed for experience and competence. Written instructions for all volunteer roles and bought in services will be prepared and circulated in advance.

The clubs physically hosting on the day will ensure buildings, sites and boating steps are in a clean and safe condition, that toilet facilities are available, and arrangements have been made to receive any crews that are wet and/ or cold.

Action points from Risk Assessment: 1.1 - 1.6, 2.1 - 2.11

4. Weather and water conditions

Tides times are known in advance, but detailed weather forecasts will not be available until about a week before the event. During the week preceding the event, the event safety adviser will monitor weather forecasts each day and inform the rest of the organising committee a week before and then daily from the preceding Wednesday, noting not just the weather, but also the likely interaction of wind and tidal flow.

The competition secretary will ensure that participating clubs are kept informed of the prospects for the day. The organising committee will review the need to cancel the competition in advance throughout the week if prospects are poor. Race control in conjunction with the Chair of the Race Committee can at any time on the day suspend or cancel racing, either as a whole or for particular classes of entry. Where it is thought possible to run reduced numbers in a division, particular note will be taken of the possible young age or lack of experience of crews and exclude these first.

Conditions along the whole course will be assessed early on race day and the organising committee or delegated officers shall decide if the competition can proceed as planned or whether it is necessary or likely that either restrictions on who rows or complete cancellation is necessary at that point. This will be repeated before each division.

Should a risk of thunderstorms and lightning be identified in advance, the organising committee will consider this information and decide whether to cancel early. If lightning occurs on the day, then the 30/30 rule will apply: rowing shall stop when the flash-to-bang count is 30 seconds (or less) and shall not resume until at least 30 minutes after the last lightning. If crews are on the water, they will all be instructed to return to the home club and land there or at one of the adjacent clubs as quickly as possible. Competitors will be asked to seek shelter in cars or within boat houses or boat bays.

Action points from Risk Assessment: 1.1, 1.4, 6.2, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7

5. Pre-start on race day

Race control will be set up early in the day and remain staffed all day. Race control will take on overall coordination of the competition, though tasks may be delegated to others with clear reporting lines. Number distribution will be set up at each site to avoid long queues at Race Control.

A safety briefing for all participating club coaches and individual rowers will be held before the first division and as necessary later for those arriving afterwards. The instructions, issued to clubs in good time before the competition, will contain the same information, except for late changes and up-to-date weather and water reports, so crews should all be well briefed in any case.

The competition safety adviser will confirm to race control that all safety provisions are in place before advising that boating can take place – notably launch-based marshals and safety cover. Crews will have been advised that the normal rules of river navigation will be followed on the way to the start, i.e. follow the south bank, but do not apply during the race.

Competitors will have been issued with the final start order before the day. Land marshals will ensure that these are kept to. Crews presenting after the last boating time indicated will be refused permission to boat to ensure prompt start time, unless race control in consultation with other officials agrees otherwise. The normal safety checks will be carried out before boating, with an emphasis on younger juniors and novices generally. The club cannot guarantee to inspect every boat however (see later re competitor and club responsibilities).

Competitors will be expected to be self-sufficient when getting on and off the water, though help from a volunteer marshal will be available if required.

Action points from Risk Assessment: 2.11-1.11, 5.1-5.5

6. Communication

The main means of communication between the race control, land and water-based marshals, launch safety cover, first aid, umpires and start and finish officials will be by UHF radio. All issued with radios will be given instructions on radio protocol and on channel or channels to use.

All will be asked to carry mobile phones as back-up and a telephone number list will be established in advance and issued to all on the day. Bought-in safety cover launches may also carry VHF radios for communication between themselves and, if so, race control, will have available a VHF radio also.

Race Control will contact Tyne VTS on VHF channel 12 of 0191 257 2080 immediately before the competition to advise the competition is starting and again on completion of the competition.

Action points: 6.1, 7.3, 7.4

7. Standard procedures on the water

The start marshalling launches will precede the first crews to boat down the river to the start marshalling areas. The safety cover launches will also be deployed along the river in accordance with the course map accompanying this document. All will report to race control when in place, and the marshalling launches shall give regular reports on how the start marshalling is progressing. All launches will check for debris en-route and clear or ask race control to allocate another crew to clear.

Race control will check with all marshalling and safety launches, umpires and finish officials that they are in place before asking the start marshals and start umpire to initiate the race. The course should be clear of all but marshalling and safety launches at the time of the start of the division. However, if a racing boat is held back for any reason and is on the course when the start is ready, the start umpire will take advice from race control and others and may start the race if advised the boat is in a safe position off the main line.

Should a commercial craft, powered pleasure boat or other river user likely to interfere with the racing appear (most likely from downstream), the nearest water-based marshal shall approach the craft and request it to turn around or wait. If the boat master refuses to do so and proceeds, then advice should be given that doing so may contravene Port byelaws by endangering others. Race control and the start umpire should be informed immediately and if necessary, racing should be suspended.

Action points from Risk Assessment: 5.1-5.5, 6.1-6.8, 7.1-7.7

8. Emergency procedures on the water

In the event of an incident occurring, it should be within sight of a safety launch and the launch will respond immediately. If a crew not involved believes an incident has not been spotted, they should report to the next safety launch. The launch crew should deal with the incident as necessary and advise race control of what is happening. Race control will call the emergency services should this be advised by the safety launch.

Race Control will contact Tyne VTS on VHF channel 12 or 0191 257 2080 in the event of a serious on water incident.

As the race is for single sculls/ pairs and doubles only and racing may be well underway, the safety launch can decide whether to evacuate the rower immediately or hold until all crews are past. If the incident is serious and immediate evacuation is necessary, then race control in conjunction with others may decide racing should be stopped immediately or other appropriate action taken to safeguard all on the river.

The safety launch may take any appropriate action without consultation with race control if needed urgently to safeguard crews or others. Racing can be restarted if deemed safe by race control. Evacuation in all cases should be to the home club, as a maximum of 3.5km away, unless very adverse wind or tidal flow dictates evacuation downstream, which should then be to the Derwenthaugh slipway, where the rowing club there will be available to help.

All actions will be monitored and logged by race control.

Action points from Risk Assessment: 4.4, 6.8, 7 – 7.7

9. Competitor and entering club responsibilities

The responsibilities of and precautions taken by the host club are outlined above and in the standard Risk Assessments. Competitors must take some responsibility for their actions, as advised by their clubs through coaches or otherwise. Coaches of juniors must ensure that all competitors are fully briefed before the competition on the instructions to crews and on the day of any further information from the briefing.

Great emphasis will be placed on the importance of reading the competitors' instructions, prior to the competition, as circulated by the competition secretary.

The instructions to crews emphasises two things for competitors and coaches to consider. Firstly, that all crews should have sufficient strength and experience to row a 3.5km race on a large tidal river. And secondly that although the competition is in early September, the weather could be cold and/or wet and suitable clothing to wear at the start should be carried. Competitors and clubs should be aware that they may not be allowed to boat or race if these expectations are not met.

The host club in conjunction with available umpires will undertake safety checks of boats before boating but cannot guarantee this will be on a 100% basis. There will be zero tolerance of faults found, given that all boats will be single sculls/ fine doubles and pairs and more susceptible to capsize. As far as possible competitors will be given time to rectify faults.

Entering clubs are asked to check all standard safety items on every boat entering before loading and again on the day before proceeding to the steps.

Competitors through coaches or directly should make themselves familiar with the Standard Rules of Racing as they apply to head races and to any local rules published, most notably the need to use only the two middle arches of Newburn Bridge when racing.

Action points from Risk Assessment: 1.4, 2.4, 4.3