Proposed Rule Changes for the 2027 USRowing Rules of Rowing

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Rule 4-104.1 (Chang, S)

Current Text

A Masters Competitor shall be classified by age according to the following categories:

(AA) 21 to 26 years,
(A) 27 to 35 years,
(B) 36 to 42 years,
(C) 43 to 49 years,
(D) 50 to 54 years,
(E) 55 to 59 years,
(F) 60 to 64 years,
(G) 65 to 69 years,
(H) 70 to 74 years,
(I) 75 to 79 years,
(J) 80 to 84 years,
(K) 85 to 89 years,
(L) 90 to 94 years,
(M) 95 to 99 years,
(N) 100 and over.

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Proposed text

4-104.1
A Masters Competitor shall be classified by age according to the following categories:

(AA) 19 to 26 years,
(A) 27 to 35 years,
(B) 36 to 42 years,
(C) 43 to 49 years,
(D) 50 to 54 years,
(E) 55 to 59 years,

(F) 60 to 64 years,
(G) 65 to 69 years,
(H) 70 to 74 years,
(I) 75 to 79 years,
(J) 80 to 84 years,
(K) 85 to 89 years,
(L) 90 to 94 years,
(M) 95 to 99 years,
(N) 100 and over.

Reason

The only event category available to 19-20 yr old rowers under the current rules are the open events, if the rowers are not in college or competing for their college team. Collegiate rowers home for the summer who are rowing with a masters team may want to race with their teams at masters regionals or masters nationals. This rule change expands access to and participation in masters rowing by removing a seemingly arbitrary exclusion of 19-20 yr old rowers from the masters definition.

Comments

DRAFT

Rule 3-108 Footgear Release [Fraser, B]

Current Text

3-108 Footgear Release

(a) In all boats, the foot stretchers, shoes, or other devices holding the feet of the Rowers shall be a type which allows the Rowers to rapidly release from the boat. Rapid release refers to a mechanism or system designed to quickly and efficiently disengage a rower's feet or shoes from the foot stretcher.

(b) Where shoes or other devices holding the feet will remain in the boat, each shoe or device shall be independently restrained such that the heel will not lift more than three inches (7.5 cm) above the foot board to which it is anchored.

Proposed Text

3-108 Footgear Release

(a) In all boats, the foot stretchers, shoes, or other devices holding the feet of the Rowers shall be a type which allows the Rowers to rapidly release from the boat. Rapid release refers to a mechanism or system designed to ~~quickly and efficiently~~ disengage a rower's feet or shoes from the foot stretcher **with a single, continuous, one-handed motion**.

(b) Where shoes or other devices holding the feet will remain in the boat, each shoe or device shall be independently restrained such that the heel will not lift more than three inches (7.5 cm) above the foot board to which it is anchored.

Reason

Due to the rise of quick-change shoe systems, multiple athletes and teams claim that these systems are also quick release systems, even though the manufacture of the quick-change system clearly states on their website that it is not a quick release system. The massaged verbiage is intended to clarify that a rower must be able to disengage either their feet or shoes from the boat with one continuous hand motion, rather than needing both hands to remove the shoes. The proposed verbiage still allows for the Shimano quick release system to not need heel ties, as the Shimano system requires only a one handed operation to release both shoes.

Comments

DRAFT

General Language Change (Ebright-Jones, B)

26 times combined in Procedures Manual and LOC Guidance Manual

Proposed Text

Replace every instance of “he or she” and “him or her” and “his or her” in the Procedures Manual and LOC Guidance Manual to “they” and “them” and “their”

Reason

The Referee Committee already approved the change for the Rules of Rowing, RPM, and LOC manual, but it seems the changes only made it to the RoR.

Comments

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General Language Change (Ebright-Jones, B)

Throughout the procedures manual (12x).

Proposed Text

Replace every instance of “licensed Referee or Assistant Referee” and “Assistant Referees” in the Procedures Manual to “Referee license” (not delineating between levels)

Reason

The Referee Committee already approved the change for the Rules of Rowing, RPM, and LOC manual, but it seems some of the changes only made it to the RoR.

Comments

DRAFT

Rule 2-102: Appointment of the Chief Referee (Ebright-Jones, B)

Current Text

(a) Before the Regatta, a Chief Referee shall be appointed.

(b) All persons acting as Chief Referee at a Registered Regatta shall hold a Referee license.

Proposed Text

Revise (a) and (b), and add (c) and (d) to read:

(a) Before the Regatta, a Chief Referee shall be appointed ***by the LOC or, for a USRowing owned event, USRowing***.

(b) All persons acting as Chief Referee at a Registered Regatta shall hold a ~~Referee license~~ ***Chief endorsement.***

Reason

(a) The LOC Guidance Manual says the LOC may appoint the Chief Referee. We need to change the rules to be in line with the guidance manual and common practice. (b) The Referee Committee has already been using the Chief endorsement system since May 2025. This rule change is just to align with our policy.

Comments

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Rule 2-102: Appointment of the Chief Referee (Ebright-Jones, B)

Current Text

N/A

Proposed Text

(c) Before the Regatta, a Deputy Chief Referee may be appointed.

(d) All persons acting as Deputy Chief Referee at a Registered Regatta shall hold a license.

Reason

(c) We should add deputies to legitimize their existence. Right now, they are only mentioned in the rulebook once and not defined. (d) We need to clarify that anyone can be a deputy (especially considering there is no other way to train them).

Comments

DRAFT

Rule 3-108: Footgear Release (Ebright-Jones, B & Keddy, P)

Current Text

(a) In all boats, the foot stretchers, shoes, or other devices holding the feet of the Rowers shall be a type which allows the Rowers to rapidly release from the boat. Rapid release refers to a mechanism or system designed to quickly and efficiently disengage a rower's feet or shoes from the foot stretcher.

Proposed Text

(a) In all boats, the foot stretchers, shoes, or other devices holding the feet of the Rowers shall be a type which allows the Rowers to rapidly release from the boat. ***Where laces, Velcro or similar materials must be opened before the rower can remove their feet from the shoes or other device, all such materials must be able to be released immediately by the rower with a single quick hand action of pulling on one easily accessible strap.*** Rapid release refers to a mechanism or system designed to quickly and efficiently disengage a rower's feet or shoes from the foot stretcher. ***Where shoes or other devices holding the feet will not remain in the boat, each shoe or device must be able to be released by the rower either without using their hands or with a single quick hand action of pulling on one easily accessible strap or release device.***

Reason

Rule 3-108 Footgear Release as written in Article III is inconsistent with the Rules of Rowing Referee Procedures Manual (Procedure - Boat Launching - Safety Checks). Page 105 (5) mandates referees when conducting safety checks to "ensure that both shoes can be opened by pulling with a single hand, single motion." If this proposal is rejected, then the referee procedures manual must also be amended.

Further, the proposed wording is not new to USRowing. The World Rowing Rules include a shoe safety inspection, which mandates the presence of the single hand, single motion quick release mechanism (APPENDIX R2, Bye-Laws to Rule 29, Boats and Equipment). Athletes and coaches at international competitions will undoubtedly be expected to follow these rules.

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Comments

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Rule 3-108: Footgear Release (Ebright-Jones, B)

Current Text

(b) Where shoes or other devices holding the feet will remain in the boat, each shoe or device shall be independently restrained such that the heel will not lift more than three inches (7.5 cm) above the foot board to which it is anchored.

Proposed Text

Revise (b) to read:

(b) Where shoes or other devices holding the feet will remain in the boat, each shoe or device shall be independently restrained such that when the heel reaches the horizontal position the foot will be released from the shoe.

Reason

We are borrowing from the WR rulebook to provide a more functional definition of safe footgear release. The language focuses on ensuring the athlete's foot is released from the shoe rather than relying on a fixed measurement.

Comments

DRAFT

Article III – Equipment, Part A – Construction and Design (Ebright-Jones, B)

Current Text

N/A

Proposed Text

Add 11th rule to read:

3-111 Safety Requirements for Boats

A boat equipped with portholes that provide a service entrance to the inside of the canvas area (bowdeck/sterndeck) shall have those portholes plugged in a watertight manner to preserve the status of the shell as a flotation device.

Reason

This is a basic safety feature of the rowing shells that gives safety personnel extra time to respond in the event of an emergency (see WR Guideline: "A boat when full of water with a crew of average weight equal to the design weight stated on the boat's production plaque, seated in the rowing position should float such that the top of the seat is a maximum of 5 cm below the static waterline" – that won't happen with open portholes). This requirement codifies enforcement already common at higher-level regattas, where some crews may be unfamiliar with the practice. Ideally, this change also spurs community members to think about rowing with a properly watertight shell at practice, too.

Comments

DRAFT

Rule 6-104: Order of Racing (Ebright-Jones, B)

Current Text

(a) The start of each racing session shall be separated by at least six hours.

Proposed Text

Delete (a)

Reason

The Rules Committee suggested that “this entire bullet should be deleted to give the HPC whatever flexibility it needs to determine the fastest crew.” I agree.

Comments

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Rule 6-105: Penalties for Interference in Trials Races AND 10-308 Eyewear for Visually Impaired Rowers (Ebright-Jones, B)

Current Text

[Deleted]

Proposed Text

Actually delete it.

~~[Deleted]~~

Reason

The Referee Committee agreed last year a standard that 3 years after a rule is deleted it will be automatically removed from the book. These rules have been in [Deleted] status for at least 4 years now.

Comments

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Rule 2-503 (Engel, G)

(to be inserted after current Rule 2-502 or alternatively as a part G)

Current Text

N/A

Proposed Text

2-503 Timing Resolution

(a.) The LOC shall choose a timing results resolution based on the physical constraints of the regatta and available technology.

(b.) Results resolution is chose

(c.) n from the following:

(1.) 0.10 seconds — required when any of the following are true:

- Start or finish structures are floating and may drift outside alignment tolerance required for 0.01 resolution.
- Human response time is involved.
- The timing technology precision is greater than 0.01s.

(2.) 0.01 seconds — allowed when any of the following are true and are supported by the chosen timing technology:

- The race has multiple lanes and the start and finish lines are surveyed to be collinear sufficient to achieve 0.01s accuracy across lanes.
- The race is a head race or time-trial with fixed position timing
- The start and finish lines are the same fixed position

(d.) Any technology that meets the required precision and accuracy requirements can be used.

(1,) A timing system must provide times that are at least as precise as the chosen resolution.

(2.) Raw data from the timing system shall be archived for at least 14 days after the regatta to allow for later review.

(d) If the measured time gap between crews is less than the selected resolution, a tie shall be declared between the crews involved and each shall receive the same placing and official time.

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Reason

At present, the USRowing Rules of Rowing specify no numeric resolution, leaving organizers to decide how many decimal places to publish and when to call a tie. In contrast, most other federations specify timing requirements.

This amendment introduces a clear, nationally consistent timing-standards framework for all USRowing-sanctioned regattas.

Even a seemingly insignificant 0.05 ° course mis-alignment displaces the timing plane by about 6 cm at lane 6—exactly the distance an eight-person shell covers in 0.01 s. Awarding medals based on the commonly used
0.001 resolution is beyond our ability to precisely measure.

The proposed amendment will give athletes confidence that published results accurately reflect performance, streamline jury decisions, and keep U.S. regattas in step with international best practice.

Comments

DRAFT

Referee Procedures Manual General Language Change (Angelillo, M)

5) Referee, (7) Finishing the Race, After the last Crew has finished the Race, Confirm with your partner referee all is well, If Yes,

Current Text

"Announce the time from your stopwatch to the nearest tenth of a second, including noting which place if not from the first motion of the finish flag."

Proposed change

1 (mathematically correct "to the nearest tenth"):

"Announce the time from your stopwatch to the nearest tenth of a second (if your stopwatch shows more than tenths, round to the nearest tenth, .01-.04 seconds rounds down and .05-.09 seconds rounds up), including noting which place if not from the first motion of the finish flag."

Proposed change alternative

2 (no rounding so removes word nearest):

"Announce the time from your stopwatch to a tenth of a second (if your stopwatch shows more than tenths, ignore all digits past the tenth digit), including noting which place if not from the first motion of the finish flag."

Proposed change alternative

3 (leaves it up to the referee how they want to interpret tenth):

“Announce the time from your stopwatch to a tenth of a second, including noting which place if not from the first motion of the finish flag.”

Reason

No Stated Reason

Comments

DRAFT

Rule Page 37 of 2026 RowFest Entry Packet: Club Event Masters (Davis, D)

Current Text

To compete in Club Event races, all members of the crew (including coxswains) must be from the same club and live within 50 miles of that club."

Proposed Text

Revise paragraph "CLUB EVENTS (MASTERS) p 37 of 2026 RowFest Entry Packet to read: To compete in Club Event races, all members of the crew (***excluding*** coxswains) must be from the same club and live within 50 miles of that club."

Reason

The change is to create equitability for geographic areas where there are large distances between rowing clubs compared with areas that contain several rowing clubs in close proximity.Additionally, changing the designation will increase consistency with other US Rowing rules, where the coxswain is excluded from the designation.

See:
Rule 4-103 Eligibility to Compete in Events
h) A Rower assigned a sex at birth of female can compete
in any Event. A Rower assigned a sex at birth of male cannot compete in Events for women. **Coxswains are exempt from this rule and can compete in any Events.** A Crew competing in a mixed Event must consist of 50% rowers who are qualified to compete in the Women's competition category and 50% rowers of any sex, **not including the Coxswain.**

Rule 4-104.1 .d.2 Classification by Age
"(2) The age category of a Masters Crew shall be determined by the average age of the Rowers in the Crew,

Rule 4-104.3 Lightweights

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"(c) **The Coxswain shall not be counted for purposes of this rule."**

Rule 4-105 Coxswains
(b) A male Coxswain may compete in Events for women, and a female Coxswain may compete in Events for men.
(d) For Adaptive Rowing or Para Rowing Events, **there is no restriction on Coxswains in respect to Adaptive Rowing or Para Rowing eligibility, gender, or age.**

Comments

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