



Referee Committee Meeting Minutes (1/28/2026)

Committee Members Present: Letcher Ross, Eric Chiang, Liz Jenista, Jess McAlear, Bruce Doak, Jim Dwyer, Michael Murphy, Blake Ebright-Jones, Kathleen Crowe, Bryan Fraser, Elaine Roden

Committee Members Absent:

Assistant Regional Coordinators Present: Gudi Bigga

USRowing Present: Sarah McAuliffe

1. Opening & Housekeeping

- Informal greetings and weather chat.
- Sarah notes:
 - Higher-than-usual guest attendance.
 - Meeting now ends at 9:00 (not 9:30).
 - Portion of meeting will be Executive Session (committee only).

2. Meeting Process & Pre-Reads

- Sarah proposes:
 - Sending pre-reads by end of the weekend before each meeting so questions can be handled in advance.

Action:

- Sarah – Start sending pre-reads by the weekend before each meeting and adjust format based on committee feedback.

3. USRowing Docs – Feedback by Feb 11

- Earlier email with job descriptions, survey responses, etc. did not reach everyone (likely file size).
- Ask: Committee to provide feedback by the February 11 meeting.

Actions:

- Sarah – Re-send the document package (splitting if needed) and request feedback by Feb 11.



4. Travel Policy & National Jury Interest Form

- Draft travel policy announcement and national-championship jury interest form are nearly ready in RefCorps.

- Plan to send policy + interest link together so referees see the full package.

Actions:

- Sarah –
- Finalize travel policy + interest form and send drafts to committee
- Include a feedback deadline and then publish policy + form together (target end of next week, subject to reviews).

5. Rules of Rowing Update

- New Rules of Rowing text received from committee.
- Internal USRowing review set for Friday morning.
- After approval:
- Send to print early next week.
- Publish new rules on website.
- Eric asks for a chance for the committee to proofread and catch errors (typos, contacts, L1/L2/L3, clinicians, endorsements).

Actions:

- Sarah –
- Conduct internal review Friday, then send rules to print and publish online.
- Coordinate with Letcher on how to handle a committee quality-check and corrections (status lists, endorsements, etc.).

6. Referee Welcome Packets

- List of required welcome packets for new referees is complete.
- TBD on Regatta Print for 2026 items and pricing.
- After confirmation, packets will be:
- Ordered.



- Sent retroactively to new 2025 and early 2026 referees.

Actions:

- Sarah (with Chris) –
- Get final confirmation and pricing from Regatta Print.
- Place packet orders and arrange retroactive mailings for 2025/early-2026 referees.

7. Referee GIFT Program

- GIFT program (approved in 2021) recognizes referees with 20+ years of active service with a \$100 gift via Regatta Print selection page/QR code.
- USRowing allocating \$500 in 2026, aiming to increase later.
- Program to be written into Regional Coordinator Manual.

Actions:

- Sarah & Elaine (with Chris & Regatta Print) –
- Incorporate GIFT program into the Regional Coordinator Manual.
- Finalize and launch gift selection process and begin issuing gifts using 2026 funds.

8. National Endorsement Proposal & Evaluation Program

- Working group proposed a national endorsement scheme for USRowing-owned national juries (presented Dec 3, 2025).
- Sarah has asked to pause implementation for 2026:
- Need clearer, uniform evaluation policy and process and more transparency before adding a sub-endorsement.
- Aim: revisit for possible 2027 implementation.
- Letcher agrees:
- Priority is reinstating a uniform evaluation program.
- Need a communication and implementation plan so referees see changes coming.

Actions:

- Letcher & Sarah –
- Schedule a future agenda item to define a uniform evaluation program and its link to any endorsement system.
- Develop a timeline + communication plan targeting 2027.



9. Indoor Nationals – Chief Report

- Question: Should Indoor Nationals chief referee file a post-event report?
- Answer: Yes – it is a national championship and should follow the standard process.
- A standard post-event survey/form exists for chiefs.

Actions:

- Sarah –
 - Distribute the standard chief post-event form for all USRowing-owned events.
 - Ensure Mariah submits a post-event report for Indoor Nationals.
 - Address in upcoming chiefs' meeting.

10. Executive Session

- Committee moves into Executive Session for confidential matters.
- Non-committee attendees moved to breakout or removed temporarily.
- No public details recorded.

11. World Rowing IOP Proposal & Governance

Overview

- Kathleen & Jim's subcommittee reviewed all World Rowing-related IOP sections.
- Goals:
 - 1 Clarify language (update terminology, remove ambiguity).
 - 2 Strengthen governance so the Referee Committee can exercise its responsibilities around nominations and oversight.
 - 3 Improve transparency and career clarity for current/prospective World Rowing umpires.

Key Discussion Points

- Eric:
 - Wants more time to review and a clear process for:
 - Outdated references (old year requirements, NRR, etc.).
 - Understanding the ranking system used for World Rowing nominations.
 - Notes at least one change (e.g., letters of recommendation) wasn't obvious in the summary.
- Kathleen:
 - Clarifies that all changes are visible in the redline; the summary only lists major items.



- Will verify no older draft slipped into circulation.
- Letcher:
 - Supports the work but wants World Rowing umpires and candidates to see and comment on the proposal before final approval.
 - Recommends postponing a vote.

Decision & Timeline

- No vote at this meeting.
- Proposal will be:
 - Sent directly to World Rowing umpires and candidates.
 - Feedback collected ahead of a planned discussion/approval attempt at the February 25 meeting.

Actions:

- Kathleen & Jim (with staff support) –
 - Confirm correct proposal documents (comparison + redline) and share links.
 - Compile a current list of World Rowing umpires and candidates.
- Letcher –
 - Email all World Rowing umpires/candidates with links to documents, summary of goals, and a feedback deadline (~1 week before Feb 25).
- Subcommittee –
 - Consolidate committee and umpire feedback.
 - Remove outdated terms/requirements and prepare a clean final draft for the Feb 25 meeting.

12. National Juries: Youth, RowFest, Beach

Numbers (current working plan)

- Youth Nationals: jury increased by 4, total 32 referees.
- RowFest:
 - First portion: ~30 referees.
 - Masters portion: ~40 referees (longer event; effectively two juries).
- Reason: address repeated feedback to “add more referees” and reduce excessive daily hours.

Discussion Themes

- Big questions:
 - How many referees can we realistically staff?
 - Should referees be allowed to work two national events in a year?



- How do we define a “qualified” national-level referee?

Key points:

- Jim & Eric:
 - Suggest discussing whether to allow double assignments (two events per year) to reach required jury sizes, prioritizing giving each qualified referee at least one event first.
- Blake & others:
 - If doubling:
 - Avoid pairing two RowFest segments for the same person if that becomes too heavy.
 - It’s more useful if one of an individual’s two events is RowFest, where staffing is hardest.
- Letcher:
 - Larger juries should cleanly support the message: shorter, more humane workdays.
 - Overlong days are a disincentive to volunteering.
- Qualification threshold:
 - Committee needs to define minimum standards to be considered “qualified” for a national jury assignment.

Actions:

- Sarah –
 - Circulate a concise jury-allotment document (numbers and structure for Youth, RowFest, Beach) ahead of the next meeting.
- Letcher & Sarah (committee) –
 - Put national jury policy near the top of the next agenda, including:
 - Double-assignment policy (who can work two nationals and in what combinations).
 - Definition of “qualified” for national assignments.
 - Integration of these rules into the interest form/survey and communications.

13. Beach Sprints & Trials Intersection

- Eric reiterates concerns that Youth Beach Sprints (with speed order components) might require trials-qualified staff.
- Sarah clarifies:
 - Youth Beach Sprints does not require a full trials jury.



- If the chief is unavailable, a non-trials deputy could step up as long as someone nearby has trials experience (U19 flat trials are nearby, so this is feasible).

14. Clinician Training (Referee College)

- Andy & Sarah announce:
 - Two clinician-only online trainings (with final materials) by Mary Bush and Sarah:
 - Tomorrow 6pm Eastern.
 - Saturday 1pm Eastern.
 - Clarified that these are not open to non-clinicians.

Action:

- Andy & Mary – Deliver the two clinician trainings using final materials.

15. Deferred Topics

The following items were raised but deferred to future meetings due to time:

- Clinics 2026 (broader planning beyond clinician-only meetings).
- 2026 level adjustments (how to handle waivers for people not meeting regatta-day counts).

16. Adjournment

- Final check for additional business.
- Motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and approved.