



Advice to Competitors and their Supporters

The Advice to Competitors and their Supporters forms part of the Race rules. Entries are accepted on the basis that Competitors and their Supporters have read all the Race rules and agree to be bound by them.

The failure to follow the instructions of police, traffic wardens, lock-keepers, marshals, umpires or other organising staff regarding support of crews can jeopardise the future of the Race and may also result in your crew(s) or team(s) being subject to time penalties or even disqualification.

TRAINING FOR THE RACE

1. Under ideal conditions, the race calls for strenuous and sustained effort. In bad weather, it can be extremely arduous and below Teddington on the Tideway, dangerous. Only experienced paddlers who are able to swim and who have trained rigorously for at least three months prior to Easter should attempt the Race.
2. Competitors are advised to spare no effort in training over long distances and in portaging locks with the weight of kit and with the boat that they intend to use for the Race. Training should take place in all conditions, within reason, both by day, and for Senior Doubles, by night. Up-to-date information as to any special dangers on the non-Tidal Thames is available from the Environment Agency. The canal presents particular hazards of its own and should therefore be incorporated in any training schedule.
3. Competitors are reminded that it is vitally important that they wear buoyancy aids during all training sessions so that they become accustomed to the extra weight and bulk and do not put themselves at undue risk in the event of a capsize or other incident during long training paddles.
4. Competitors are reminded that their entry fee covers only the period of the Race. At all other times their boats must carry a current licence plate issued by the appropriate authority for the Canal (the British Waterways Board) and for the River Thames (the Environment Agency). Please do not use the waterways without the appropriate licence, as this could easily prejudice permission being granted to run the Race in future. Comprehensive BCU membership incorporates both Thames and Canal licences.

GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE RACE

1. Accommodation

Devizes

Accommodation is available free of charge, in Scout Headquarters and/or the Corn Exchange in Devizes on Thursday night. Entrants in the Senior Doubles race will have the use of the Scout Headquarters only on Good Friday night. Sleeping bags will be necessary. Under no circumstances may boats be taken into the buildings. Crews must rise in time to clean up and put all refuse in the bin provided. Please note there is no access to the Corn Exchange after 10 pm as the doors are locked at that time. Devizes' Tourist Information Office: - 01380 729408

Newbury

Camping is available at the Northcroft Leisure Centre for all competitors in the 'Stages' event, in the case of Junior Doubles this is compulsory. Newbury Tourist Information Office: - 01635 30267

Devizes to Westminster 2010 – Advice to Competitors and their Supporters

Marlow

Camping is available at Longridge Scout Boating Centre for all competitors in the 'Stages' event, in the case of Junior Doubles this is compulsory. No pets on site. Marlow Tourist Information Office: - 01628 483597

Ham (Thames Young Mariners)

Camping is available at Thames Young Mariners for all competitors in the 'Stages' event, in the case of Junior Doubles this is compulsory. Richmond Tourist Information Office: - 0208 940 9125

2. Entry changes

Please ensure any changes, particularly changes of address for correspondence or support crews' mobile phone numbers, are notified promptly to the Competition Secretary.

3. Tide times

High Tide at Teddington is approximately one hour after High Tide at London Bridge. Times of high tide at London Bridge are given in the Tide Tables, the AA Handbook, Old Moore's Almanac and the Thames Book.

Richmond Draw Lock is raised 2 hours before and lowered 2 hours after high tide at Teddington. (i.e. clear passage is only possible during these four hours.) If the way is closed, portage on the left-hand side (boat rollers), but note that this portage is always muddy and extremely slippery.

Supporters and competitors must make themselves aware of the rules concerning passage through Teddington and accept that crews that arrive at Teddington outside the permitted 'window' will not be allowed to proceed further.

4. Results

A full list of provisional results will be posted on the Internet during the course of Easter Monday and a finalised set of results sent to each crew shortly after the Race. The date of the Presentation of Trophies will also be notified at this time.

5. Lost property

Competitors and support parties are requested to hand all lost property in at the Wokingham Waterside Centre or to the Race Organiser's portable cabin at Westminster where all enquiries regarding such property should be made.

6. Finishing arrangements

Arrangements for finishing on both Sunday and Monday will be published over the Easter Weekend. Competitors should always paddle past the sign marked "Finish" until they hear a horn blast, whistle or other signal that indicates that they have finished.

POTENTIAL RACE HAZARDS, RISKS AND PROBLEMS

1. All other boat traffic including rowing boats with limited rearwards visibility presents a potential hazard. So too do powered motor boats, inexperienced day-trippers using the river in hired craft, Class V passenger vessels on the Tideway, moored barges and large boats berthed on the Thames, which are especially to be avoided at all times. Never approach or attempt to moor up to tethered boats on the Tideway as you may be swept under them under conditions of moderate flow.

In the event of retirement or emergency, call Race Control on 0207 620 0298

Devizes to Westminster 2010 – Advice to Competitors and their Supporters

2. Rights of way: allow powered craft to use centre of canal as they require more draft and remember that other boats are generally less manoeuvrable than canoes.
3. Road traffic when portaging across roads. Support crew should watch for fast-moving traffic which may not expect to see canoeists crossing roads. DW staff may be present at road crossings but have no authority to stop traffic so canoeists should assume that they have to give way to traffic.
4. Stakes on land and in water plus other submerged obstacles, all of which present trip hazards or can easily damage canoes.
5. Low bridges. (Canal only – if in doubt, portage round). Richmond Draw Lock, if portaged, is always muddy and extremely slippery. .
6. Drinking canal or river water. This can cause severe illness and is strongly discouraged.
7. Aggressive swans. Nesting birds to be avoided wherever possible. Portage may be necessary.
8. Extreme weather conditions of all kinds can be experienced at Easter and can cause anything from sunburn and heatstroke to exposure or hypothermia. Sudden changes in temperature and conditions are possible. Be aware of the risks of wearing inadequate or inappropriate clothing. Always dress for the conditions, remember that long-sleeved and long-legged thermals help retain more heat when wet.
9. Dehydration, severe fatigue, cuts, bruises and severe blistering can all be expected.
10. Weirs – keep well clear especially during times of high river flow. Never shoot any weir at any time during the Race.
11. Lack of public facilities. Relieving oneself in a public place by competitors or supporters is an offence and also a specific breach of the DW rules that can result in time penalties being awarded.
12. Savernake Tunnel (in event of capsize, ledge on right and chains can assist re-entry).
13. Thames Bridges – keep well clear of bridge arches, particularly during times of high flow. All Tideway bridges now carry a white isophase light above the centre arch. If this light is in use it indicates that a large or towing vessel is about to pass under the bridge. Arches of bridges which carry an up-side-down triangle (lit red at night), are closed to all traffic.
13. Damage to equipment is likely. Thoroughly check all items before you start. Make sure your support crew carry spare seats, paddles, rudders, torches, torch batteries, lightsticks and other items. All items of equipment can be replaced during the event, with the exception of boats, which may only be repaired.

SUPPORTING THE RACE – Dos and Don'ts

1. Overall principles of supporting a crew.

The organised support and effective replenishment of food and drink is essential for successful completion of the Race.

The behaviour and actions of support crews can affect public perceptions towards the Race as much as that of competitors.

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2. Behaviour

Supporters must behave responsibly at all times and must follow instructions of the police, traffic wardens, lock-keepers, marshals, umpires or other organising staff with regard to parking, access or other matters.

Supporters must behave considerately to others, particularly residents, lock users and members of the public who may not be aware that a race is in progress.

Lack of sleep or the emotion of watching close friends and/or relatives under extreme physical stress can cause supporters to behave inappropriately.

Misbehaviour can, however, prejudice the future of the Race and will not be tolerated by the event organisers who will disqualify or impose time penalties on crew(s) or team(s) where it is deemed necessary.

3. Safety

(a) Driving and parking

Obey all traffic rules and restrictions at all times. Adhere to speed limits and parking restrictions.

Inconsiderate, thoughtless or dangerous parking is the source of the most complaints to the Race organisers. Never leave your vehicle where it could obstruct access for the emergency services.

Do not park where you may create an obstruction for other road users, such as across driveways, on private property, near to or on railway crossings and road junctions.

Never use a pub car park unless you are buying food or drink inside. Note that some pub landlords contract parking management out to companies who may clamp your vehicle first and ask questions later.

Supporters are reminded that the average speed of a double kayak on the canal is less than 6mph. Support crews can cause panic by racing from lock to lock by car, which is both dangerous and pointless.

(b) Lighting and visibility

At night-time, supporters must take care in their use of torches or flashing lights so as not to impair the night vision of paddlers or annoy residents near portages. Do not wear bright flashing/novelty lights on your clothing or shine lights directly at paddlers as it can destroy their night vision.

For paddlers who need to preserve good night vision, we recommend lighting which is clearly visible from the front but produces as little ambient glow as possible. Head torches may be worn but they can have a damaging effect on night vision. We advise competitors to test all forms of lighting on training paddles and to ensure that they are happy with what they use on the race.

White lightsticks are compulsory equipment for use at night but they are not provided by the Race Organisers so competitors and supporters must ensure they have an adequate supply to cover the hours of darkness well ahead of the race. Do not turn up at Devizes expecting to be able to buy white light sticks, you may be disappointed and you will also be penalised if you attempt to start without them. Your support crew should always carry replacement light sticks and torch batteries.

(c) Mobile phones

We strenuously urge competitors to ensure that supporters' mobile phone numbers are provided to the Race Organiser at the time of entry so that we have a means of contact in case of emergency. It is also recommended that paddlers carry mobile phones (with their supporters' numbers and the Race Control number pre-programmed) in a waterproof container during the race in case of any difficulties or delays.

4. Portages

(a) Overcrowding and noise

Many locks become crowded with support crew, particularly towards Teddington. Supporters are encouraged to minimise the number of cars they use to follow the Race. A boat can be successfully supported by just one vehicle.

At some locks, especially the latter portages on the Thames, marshals or umpires may have to restrict access on safety grounds to one person per crew.

Keep noise to a minimum at all times but especially during the hours of darkness and particularly in residential areas.

(b) Permanent restrictions

There are NO facilities for contacting crews at BLAKE'S LOCK and COUNTY LOCK, SHIPLAKE or BOVENEY. Do not go to these locks to watch or provide support to your crews. Support vehicles are also not permitted on access roads to these locks.

No vehicles are allowed on the SONNING lock access road or in the BOULTER'S Hotel car park.

The Runnymede Hotel grounds (at BELL WEIR) are only for hotel guests and are out of bounds to supporters and their vehicles.

Other locks may be put out of bounds before or during the race. If in doubt, follow the instructions of race officials and lock-keepers and their assistants at all times.

Substantial time penalties will be imposed on all crews whose supporters are found ignoring any of these restrictions.

(c) Artificial compulsory portage

On Dreadnought Reach, just downstream of Kennet Mouth (Wokingham Waterside Centre), there is a compulsory portage. All competitors must portage at this point.

This is the first opportunity that supporters will have to reach their crews on the Thames.

Because of access restrictions at the previous two portages in Reading (Blake's Lock and County Lock) and at the following portage (Sonning) supporters are strongly encouraged to make every effort to reach their crews at Dreadnought Reach.