

Oxford University Rowing Clubs

Event And Safety Plan Autumn Fours

2021



Introduction

Autumn Fours is an annual inter-collegiate small boats competition that will be held on Sunday 7th November 2021. The competition will be run as a side-by-side knockout tournament: two crews will race alongside each other from Longbridges Boathouse up to Cox Stone (the Bumps finish line). The winner (judged by the bows) will progress to the next round. Racing will occur from midday until all racing is completed, or the light conditions are deemed to be too low for safe racing to occur. In the event of a low number of entries the event may be run as a “round robin” competition where the winner will be the one with the most wins. In the event of a tie, the winner will be the victor of the race between the tied boats. There will be separate men’s and women’s tournaments. The competition shall contain events for Women’s and Open coxed fours. Additional races for smaller boats, including exhibition events for mixed boats (e.g. doubles) may be run if the Senior Umpire and Race Secretary agree there is space in the program and a sufficient number of entries, and that the weather and river conditions are good enough for the safe running of the races. Autumn Fours 2021 runs with the consent of the EA and the University Proctors.

The race is run by the OURCs committee using the following system:

- **Race Secretary** – coordinates racing and is responsible for the overall organisation of the event, consulting with the Senior Umpire about safety matters and logistical changes which affect race timings.
 - **Event Committee** - help the Race Secretary with the coordination of racing and event safety.
 - **Race Desk** - Located at Longbridges Boat House, will oversee the marshals and assists the Senior Umpire. An Event Committee member, usually the Race Secretary, will be present at Race Desk at all times. They can be contacted by mobile phone or by two-way radio.
 - **Senior Umpire** (SU, wearing a yellow jacket) – with the Event Committee, they ensure the safe and timely start of the races;
 - **Marshals** – (wearing yellow bibs) work with Race Secretary and SU to ensure the safe and smooth running of the event. Details of their individual roles are given below.
- The consumption of alcohol by officials is strictly prohibited.

COVID-19

Planned COVID-19 mitigation measures are based on the current Event Management Health and Safety Guidance from Oxford University (current as of date of submission: 5th October 2021). These are shown in detail in the Risk Assessment to avoid duplication. The Event Committee take responsibility for communicating and encouraging COVID-sensible behaviour in all those attending the event. Some areas where COVID risk mitigation measures will apply (for example inside boathouses) are the province of colleges and clubs. Mitigation measures detailed in the Risk

Assessments follow the guidance of British Rowing, the sport's National Governing Body, who recommend that all elements of rowing, including competitions, are carried out at 'Rowing Level 2': largely normal rowing activity with implementation of British Rowing guidance.

Should Oxford be targeted for surge testing, additional directions from the Government and local authorities will be followed.

Entry Restrictions

Entry will be restricted to "non-novice"¹ college crews and all entrants must be valid members of an OURCs member club as defined in 1.4 of the OURCs Constitution. Novice coxswains will be allowed to enter but only if they have more than one term's experience. Entrants will also be required to have passed a swim test and entries will be checked against the OURCs swim test database. In addition to the general eligibility requirements specified in the OURCs Rules of Racing A1.6, no athlete may be a member of two crews entered for the same competition. Honorary members of a boat club may enter, and each College Boat Club is permitted one seat filled with an associate member in its Men's crews, and one seat filled with an associate member in its Women's crews. Competitors are subject to additional entry requirements in the interest of safety as specified by the Event Committee. Entries per college may be limited due to time constraints.

¹ "Non-novice" crews are defined as those for which all crew members have at least one term's experience or equivalent.

Race Organisation

Race Secretary

The Race Secretary is the event organiser and has overall responsibility for the safe running of the event, in accordance with the event plan. The event plan does not restrict the Race Secretary from halting racing at any time or from making necessary alterations to ensure the safety of competitors, organisers and members of the public. The Race Secretary, as event organiser, should appoint the Senior Umpires and members of the Event Committee. The Race Secretary shall inform other river groups of the event.

The Race Secretary is responsible for coordinating racing and so should direct members of Event Committee; tasking them as needed and as appropriate. The Race Secretary may delegate responsibilities as is appropriate. The Race Secretary consults with the SU about issues and risk mitigation affecting the safe running of the races. The Race Secretary should seek contact details for the EA for the day of the race.

Senior Umpire

Senior Umpires are appointed by the Race Secretary, and are selected from the general ratified pool of SUs (as ratified by the captains of OURCs). The Race Secretary ensures that those appointed have the necessary skill and experience to conduct their duties. Given the nature of the event, there is no formal qualification appropriate to the task, but the existing team of Senior Umpires will make sure sufficient new members are recruited to cover the job, and will ensure that new recruits are fully briefed and trained in the role.

The principal duty of the Senior Umpire is to ensure that each race is safe to start, and then to start that race in a safe fashion under the OURCs rules of racing. To this end, the Senior Umpire on duty will conduct river checks as appropriate, using the marshals to report any traffic on the river or any obstruction in the river. The SU will conduct a full river check after significant breaks in racing and repeat at their discretion sufficiently to ensure that they are satisfied the river is clear to start racing. The SU will consider the following (below) when starting each race, and will relate it to the nature of side-by-side racing and the quality and competence of the crews involved, as far as is reasonably practicable:

- The local stream conditions.
- The local weather conditions.
- Whether the race course is suitably clear of racing traffic, non-racing traffic, debris or any other obstruction.
- Whether the safety launches and first aiders are in a suitable position and ready to respond.
- Whether sufficient marshals are in place and in communication with the SU and race desk, to provide full coverage of the course.

The SU has the full operational responsibility of starting racing, and so will try to start each race in a timely fashion in accordance with the rules of racing, where circumstances and safety allow. Any other party (including but not limited to the Race Secretary, the Environment Agency, and the University) that believes that there is a good reason not to start a race, should be encouraged to inform the SU immediately. The SU may halt racing on the grounds of safety and recommend any mitigating action to the Race Secretary that might allow racing to continue.

The first Senior Umpire of the day has responsibility for checking and approving the river as sufficiently safe to open to crews for their warm-up, at a point approximately half an hour before the first race. If at any point in the day the SU considers the river to be unsafe even for warming-up crews, s/he will close the river to student traffic and suspend racing. Before opening the river, the first SU of the day will be satisfied that:

- Sufficient marshals are in place and providing full coverage of the stretch with working two-way radios.
- The stream conditions are sufficiently safe.
- The weather conditions are sufficiently safe.
- First Aid cover is available at the river.
- Any non-racing traffic already on the stretch has been spoken to and is aware of the event and circulation pattern.
- The Race Secretary and his/her/their team are ready and happy that the river be opened.

In the same manner, the final SU of the day will close the river at the end of racing, will dismiss the marshals (in stages) once they are satisfied that all racing traffic is clear of the relevant areas, and will reopen the river to non-racing circulation.

As part of the preparations for the event, the coordinating SU for the team will liaise with the Environment Agency, the Rowing Sabbatical Officer (in his/her/their safety role), and the Race Secretary, to determine any special measures to be taken to allow racing under the risk assessment in more challenging conditions such as high stream or wind. These measures may include, but are not limited to: restrictions on coxing status; restrictions on boat classes; and provision of extra safety launches.

The SU will ensure that the decisions are agreed with the Race Secretary and will communicate them in a timely fashion to the racing clubs. The Rowing Sabbatical Officer will ensure that other interested parties (such as the Proctors and/or Sports Federation) are kept informed of the measures being used, as far as necessary, and that information on the measures is available to all college boat club members, including Senior Members.

Marshals

All marshals are issued with a High Visibility jacket, a two-way radio, copies of the draw and klaxons if appropriate. Marshals in key positions are also given megaphones as appropriate. Marshals will be provided with summary notes of specific duties for their marshalling position where appropriate.

All marshals shall be briefed prior to the start of their duties by a member of the Event Committee. The brief will cover individual duties and safety procedures. Marshals are responsible for ensuring that the race proceeds safely and that all river traffic, including race traffic, is in the right place and aware of where they are going. After significant breaks in racing, the Senior Umpire will ask certain marshals (outlined below) to confirm that the course is clear of any obstructions that may impact racing. Marshals should also report to Race Desk if any significant number of pedestrians or bystanders are present, and to request support if appropriate.

During the race itself the marshals are observers, ensuring a safe and fair contest, they will also warn any bystanders or members of the public of approaching cyclists if they can do so without interrupting their river-related role, although this duty may be taken by a Bike Marshal if present.

In the event of potential collision, a competitor thrown from the boat, or other emergency on the course, marshals shall sound their safety klaxons to halt racing and radio for all others to do the same. They should alert the attention of the safety boat and first aid team as appropriate. Crews hearing a klaxon will stop racing immediately, and listen carefully for further instructions from the marshals, giving way to the safety launches.

Positions and individual duties

Key: ▼ - Marshal has a Megaphone † - Marshal performs river checks with the SU

1. Head ▼†: Approximately 50m upstream of the finish line. Instructs crews to move upstream to clear the finish line and instructs crews when to spin; Communicates with other river traffic entering the course: requests river traffic to wait if a race is in progress or klaxons a race if the craft insists on proceeding while one is running. An experienced marshal should be used on this position.

2. Finish ▼ †: At the finish (between the upstream end of Boat House Island and the Cox Stone). Judges the finish, sounds clacker board and informs race desk of the results of the races. Instructs crews to clear the finish line.
3. Boathouses A †: Upstream half of Boat House Island. Performs checks on each boat to ensure that they conform to BR and EA regulations.
4. Boathouses B †: Downstream half of Boat House Island. Performs checks on each boat to ensure that they conform to BR and EA regulations. Controls the crossing point into the Green Bank transit lane in conjunction with Green Bank crossing marshal; monitors river traffic emerging from the Cherwell cut.
5. Univ †: Outside University College Boat House Performs checks on each boat to ensure that they conform to BR and EA regulations.
6. Green Bank Crossing Marshal ▼ †: Located slightly downstream of Univ Boathouse. Works with Boathouse B marshal to control the crossing point into the Green Bank transit lane.
7. Longbridges †: Outside Longbridges Boat House. Performs checks on each boat to ensure that they conform to BR and EA regulations.
8. Top Gut ▼ †: Mouth of the gut. Pairs up racing crews and keeps note of boats that have passed downstream so as to inform the SU of the progress of crews ready to race. Instructs crews to move up onto start stations. Requests river traffic to wait if a race is about to be started.
9. Bottom Gut †: Downstream end of the Gut. Makes sure that crews are keeping to the correct circulation pattern.
10. Donnington Bridge ▼ †: Located towards Donnington Bridge. Informs crews warming up of any changes to the schedule and ensures crews are in the start area and paired up in ample time. Controls crews spinning downstream of the Gut during their warm-up.
11. [optional] Bike Marshal: Cycles ahead of each division. Provides early warning to bystanders and the general public on the towpath of the upcoming race.
12. [optional] Spare Marshal: Able to cross to Falcon or City if crews are boating from there.

The Race Desk oversees the Marshals and assists the SU. Operational decision on the deployment of additional Marshals will lie with the Event Committee and the SU.

The Senior Umpire will be situated on the start line at Longbridges.

A River Check is the process by which the SU can ascertain whether the river is clear of obstructions. The SU shall call for a River Check by the Marshalls (marked †) after significant breaks in racing, or more often at their discretion. The Marshalls are instructed to look out for and report boats, swans and floating debris. The race will only be started by the SU when they are satisfied that the course is suitably clear of obstructions.

Circulation Pattern

To ensure the safety of river traffic and the smooth running of the event, a strict circulation pattern is enforced. In the following explanatory notes, left and right refer to the course as seen by a coxswain, i.e. port (strokeside) and starboard (bowside) respectively.

Boathouse Island

Crews based on the Boathouse Island should boat from rafts at the downstream end of the island to allow crews room to land. They will then be held at Christ Church raft by the Boathouses B marshal before being allowed to cross when the river is clear over to Univ and down the Green Bank transit lane as directed by the Green Bank crossing marshal. On returning, crews should land on the upstream end of Boathouse Island.

Univ Raft

Crews based at Univ will boat and go straight into the Green Bank transit lane moving down straight into the Gut. On returning from racing, crews will progress down the transit lane on the city side of the river to Christ Church boathouse, where they will be held by the Boathouses B marshal. They may then cross the river and land pointing downstream (by “backing down”).

Longbridges

Crews boating from Longbridges will proceed straight into the warm up area below the Gut. After racing, crews will move down the Boathouse Island transit lane and will wait at the Christ Church raft to receive permission from the Boathouses B marshal to cross to the County side. They will then go down the Green Bank transit lane and land downstream at Longbridges.

Warming Up

Crews will warm up below the Gut, only spinning to go downstream after checking with the Donnington Bridge marshal. The Top Gut marshal will pair up crews just inside the Gut and then call up the pairs when necessary towards the start stations. Each racing crew will race up a buoyed lane from Longbridges to the finish stone. The two stations will be preassigned to each crew, “County” being the station closest to the towpath and “City” being on the boathouse side.

Other River Traffic

When Autumn Fours is held, there is little other river traffic, but occasionally other craft may appear in the river. Races will only be run when the river is clear of other craft. Cold weather is likely to deter swimmers and paddle boarders, despite the increasing popularity of these activities. If a race is in progress, craft intending to proceed onto the course will be asked to moor at Longbridges or the Head by marshals until the race has finished. If, however, the craft insists on proceeding, the race will be stopped. Craft take the centre of the river and crews stick to the sides of the river. In the event of a crew meeting a cruiser head on, the crew should move to starboard (i.e. bowside/the cox's right).

Communications

Two-way radios are used for communication between race control, the marshals and the medical personnel (who also use their own communication equipment).

These are distributed as follows: A minimum of 13 radios for use by the marshals, plus one for each of: the Environment Agency, the Iffley Lock lock-keeper, each Safety Boat, Race Desk, and the Senior Umpire. Call signs are assigned according to position, and are explained at the marshalling briefings.

In addition to radio communications, we have the use of a mobile phone held by Race Desk, the number will be published to competitors at least 1 week before the event, the Iffley lock keeper has a land-line (01865 777277) and the Christ Church Lodge is available if access to the meadow is required (01865 276150).

Enquiries can be dealt with by the Race Secretary via the Race Desk number, or by the Rowing Sabbatical Officer (James Lucas) who will be available on the day of the event on 07341 500865, otherwise at sabbatical@ourcs.co.uk.

Safety

Competitor Safety

Event Management

Marshals are thoroughly briefed prior to the event on their duties (as described above) by members of the Event Committee and on the advice of a Senior Umpire. The SU is responsible for ensuring that racing starts only when conditions are safe, subject to satisfactory reports from the Marshals and Race Desk. If any incident occurs that could potentially jeopardise the safety of crews, Marshals sound marine air horns/klaxons, bringing all racing to an immediate halt. On hearing a klaxon over the radios or anywhere on the course, all marshals sound their klaxons.

Crews infringing OURCs rules or acting in an unsafe manner may be subject to fines, or disqualification from the event. Information for competitors will be published before the event, detailing the safety issues. Coxes of all crews will be OURCs registered unless exempted by the Captain of Coxes (non-OURCs clubs only).

Particular attention is paid to rules covering the use of life jackets, bow balls and heel restraints and other safety equipment in the risk assessment.

Bank Riders

Novice coxes must have a bank rider unless exempted by the Senior Umpire or Captain of Coxes. Other coxes may choose to or not. Coxless boats (if present) should use discretion based on the experience of the steersman and stream conditions whether to use a bank rider or not, although it is recommended that a bank rider is present.

Stream Conditions

In the event that the river is running faster or higher than usual, the SU liaises with people including the Iffley lock keeper, the Race Secretary, the boatmen and the EA to decide how to proceed. OURCs has developed a contingency plan to allow some racing to continue (detailed in the Risk Assessment). Options include requiring crews to race with experienced/senior coxes, shortening the

course to start from the downstream end of Boathouse Island and preventing crews from going through the Gut to warm up. In extreme circumstances, the entire day's racing may be cancelled.

In the event of the EA displaying Amber or Red Boards at the local locks (indicating a strong or rising stream), it is understood that the EA must be consulted and their recommendations adhered to.

Adverse Weather Conditions

The SU will monitor weather conditions, both by reference to weather forecasts before the event and to the weather as the event proceeds. If they consider it necessary to take the weather conditions into account, they will act accordingly. Fog will prevent racing if visibility is less than 100m. Strong wind will trigger contingency plans. Options include requiring crews to race with experienced/senior coxes, shortening the course to start from the downstream end of Boathouse Island and preventing crews from going through the Gut to warm up. The entire day's racing may be cancelled if the SU deems conditions bad enough. In poor visibility in which racing will continue (decreasing light, mist, etc.) boats must be fitted with bright white lights at bow and stern which are visible through 360 degrees.

Lightning

In the event of a lightning storm, all racing will cease and competitors instructed to take suitable cover at the first available moment. The fastest way of achieving this might be to complete a division if racing is about to begin. Racing may be continued or cancelled at the discretion of the Senior Umpire in conjunction with the Race Secretary.

Medical Emergency

First Aid

First aid cover for the event will be provided by a minimum of two first aiders. First aiders will be qualified with the HSE approved First Aid at Work or equivalent qualification. First aid cover will have first aid response as their sole responsibility and will have full access to the facilities of race desk, including safety launches, for the purposes of best providing cover or best responding to an emergency. First aiders will be informed through their agents of the nature of the event and have the risk assessment made available to them. All first aiders engaged are done so on the basis of their qualification and professed skill. They are required to hold liability insurance of their own, or through their employer. They are responsible from when the SU declares the river open for racing until the SU has declared the river open for non-racing circulation at the end of the day.

First Aid kits are present in all boathouses and safety launches. Defibrillators are available at Balliol Boathouse (///ally.pilots.cloth) and University Boathouse (///nation.bunks.levels).

The designated point to transfer a casualty to an ambulance is at Riverside Centre off Donnington Bridge (postcode - OX4 4AZ, ///copy.bath.ridge). In case this is not possible, access to Christ Church meadow (///scrap.wiring.mixed) and Longbridges for emergency vehicles is arranged in advance: a key to the slip road from Donnington Bridge (///causes.gets.scars) is kept at the Race Desk, and barriers normally preventing access to Christ Church Meadow are lowered by arrangement. The Rowing Sabbatical Officer will be available by telephone to give access advice. If a casualty who is a member of the University is taken to hospital, an official of the college (chosen under advice from the SU) will be contacted.

Safety Boats

At least two powerboats are used by OURCs during the event. Each boat is driven at all times by qualified personnel (RYA level 2, or equivalent e.g. BSAC). At least one boat will be used to give First Aid the quickest possible access to an incident.

Bystander Safety

Due to the very low number of bystanders expected, the handling of their safety will rest with the Marshals. As well as reporting to the SU on the state of the river prior to racing, Marshals will also report on numbers of pedestrians to the Race Desk. Marshals and the use of clear signs at entry points onto the towpath will warn pedestrians of oncoming races. In the event of unsafe or disruptive behaviour by spectators, Marshals will report to the Race Desk, who may postpone the start of a division or contact the Police as appropriate.

Numbers of cyclists accompanying divisions will be strictly controlled. Each crew will be limited to one accompanying bike that may follow alongside the crew to ensure safety rather than to coach, with sanctions being applied to clubs that disobey this rule. Cyclists are responsible for using the towpath in a safe fashion and must not unreasonably interfere with the public use of the public right of way. Occasional permission may be granted for an additional cyclist to accompany a crew by an Event Committee member or the SU - for example to assist in training a novice cox. Crews will be reminded by e-mail before the event of the need for accompanying cyclists to give way to pedestrians and make safety a priority.

Marshals shall be responsible for reporting unsafe behaviour of accompanying cyclists. Captains will be made aware that they are responsible for the conduct of their coaches, and sanctions will be employed in the case of dangerous or inappropriate behaviour. In the event of an accident, Marshals will report to the Race desk, which will take appropriate action.

End of Event

At the end of racing the Event Committee should prioritise announcing the results of the days racing. These should be posted on the OURCs website within 24 hours of the end of racing. The Senior Umpire and the Event Committee will have a short debrief after the event with the aim of promoting the smooth running of future events.