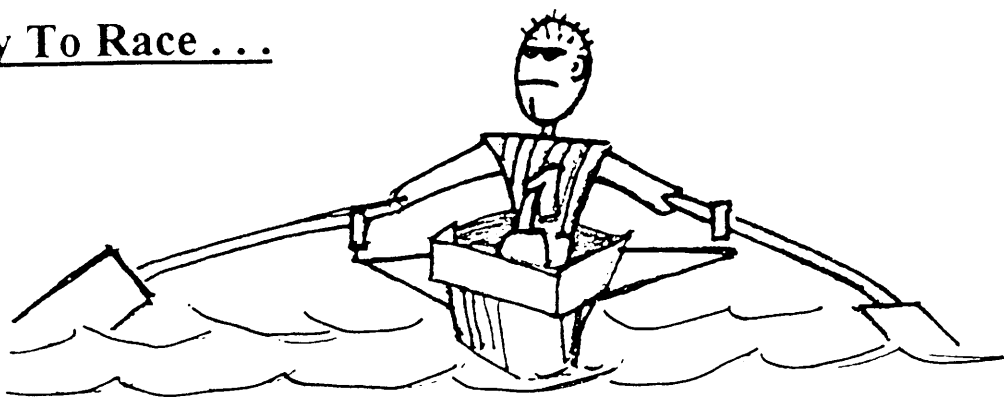


So You're Ready To Race . . .

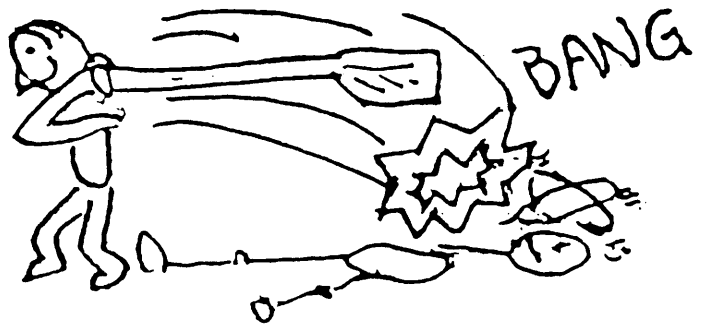


You've put in lots of practice and it's time for your first Regatta. The sight of lots of boats together can come as quite a surprise for many beginning rowers – any major Tasmanian Rowing Regatta will attract 200 or more boats and have a very busy program of racing. Yet most Tasmanian rowers train on fairly quiet waters, with maybe only half a dozen or so boats on the water at a time.

This booklet covers many of the things you need to know before you leave the ways for your first race. Read it carefully so you'll know what to expect and can concentrate on your racing!

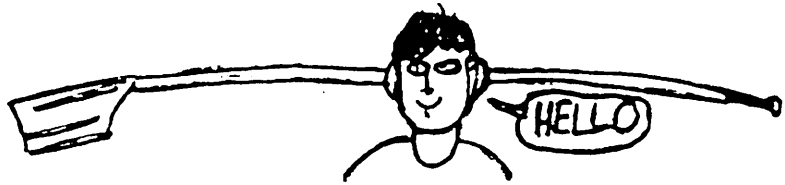
Important terms to know and skills to practice . . .

- You may have managed so far without really being sure which is the stroke side and which is the bow side of your boat, but no more!
Regatta officials will use basic rowing terms and language which you need to know without having to stop and think.
Probably the most important terms to know before you go to a Regatta are 'touch up', 'back up' and 'check your boat'. In fact, not only should you know what they mean, but you should be able to do them quite confidently.
- At Regattas you will be expected to move into position for your races without too much mucking around. You will be lined up in lanes, as you would for a running race, and it's not good enough to be close to where you should be – you must be in the right place!
Get lots of practice just moving about – and practice moving around close to other boats is particularly useful.
- You need to be able to keep your boat steady in one place for minutes at a time. Before every race you will have to sit in your position at the starting line for at least two or three minutes – and if there's a crosswind blowing that takes skill!
Practice until you can keep your boat steady with confidence, especially in windy conditions.
- An extremely useful trick to regain control of a double or quad which has been moved out of line by the wind is for the number 2 to take a few strokes with the bow oar — easy to do once you know how it's done and you've practised it a bit, but confusing if you're trying it for the first time in a strong breeze at the starting line!



On the shore before your event

- There will be an official program of events available on the day. That program may have different times from those in the provisional program sent out to your coach. Make sure you're following the official program: you wouldn't be the first person to miss a race because they were following the wrong program!
- Although events are spread out so that rowers get the chance to rest between their races, the program will be very busy and it's important that races run on time.
Talk with your coach to find out how many minutes before the event you should start to move your boat down to the ways and make sure you don't let your team-mates down by disappearing just as they're about to get the boat onto the water!
- Make sure you know what event you're in, what division and what lane number. When officials are lining you up for your event they'll call out the name of the event first and then each boat by its lane number and its club or school. e.g. Junior B Girls, Division 2: Lane 1 Lindisfarne, Lane 2 Ulverstone, etc.
If you don't think you'll be able to remember – and lots of rowers forget once they're out on the water – it's not a bad idea to write the event and division on the back of your hand. If there is more than one boat from your club in the event, the official will call out the stroke's name as well as the club, to be sure that you're in the right place: e.g. Lane 2 Ulverstone, Smith; Lane 3 Ulverstone, Brown. If your stroke has been changed from the person named in the program your coach should let the control tower know well before the race so the boats can be identified properly.
- You must be wearing your correct club or school rowing suit or colours. That's important – the officials need to know which club you're rowing for.
That includes caps: your cap must be the official club or school colour. If you wear any other colour cap you will probably be asked to take it off.
The same rule applies to your cox as well, of course – any clothing which is visible must be in club or school colours.
- Check that your lane number is on the boat.. It must be quite firm so that it won't fall out during the race.
Lane numbers are important in helping officials get the boats organised at the start line. Then at the end of the race judges record positions by lane numbers – and in a close finish you wouldn't want them to make a mistake!
- It's a good idea to wear a top to keep you warm while you're waiting for your race – if you have to sit and wait about for a while you'll soon get chilly, especially if there's a breeze blowing, or some rain.
You can take it off and tuck it out of the way once you're lined up and waiting at the start. You'll need every bit of energy you've got for your race: don't waste it heating up your body!



Race Officials

- While you're on the water your movements will be controlled by boat officials — the starter, umpires and rescue boat crews. Their job is to make sure that you are safe while you are on the water, to ensure you're treated fairly at all times and to keep the program running on time.

Most officials are ex-rowers who give up their time free of charge because they enjoy the involvement with rowing and with young people.

- Boat officials are usually calm, helpful and friendly. They understand that racing is stressful, especially when you're new to it and you're not feeling too sure of yourself. However, there might be times when you think they're quite snappy or that they're picking on you unfairly.

Just remember, they spend all day out on the water, sometimes without a break, sometimes cold and wet. They would be super-human if they didn't get irritated occasionally by rowers who just don't seem to listen to what they're told or who don't seem to care if they keep others waiting.

- Boat officials will use megaphones when they are talking to you, but while you're on the water it is very important to stay quiet so that you can hear their instructions about when and where to move.

Remember what you're there for: keep the chatting and giggling 'till after your race.

- So what do you call an official if you're trying to attract his attention? The traditional formal title of Mr Starter or Mr Umpire (or Madam, as the case may be) is probably easiest and will always sound polite and respectful – and good manners usually work wonders!

- Do your bit to make the boat officials' job easy.

Remember: no boat officials, no racing!

Out on the water, waiting to be called onto the course

- There are very strict traffic rules on the water: all traffic moves in one direction, for safety. Be sure you don't turn round and row in the wrong direction – people could get very upset with you, or worse, run into you!

- You are not allowed out onto the course itself until it is time for your race. Sometimes you may want to cross the course to go further up the lake or river for a training row, but before you move onto the course you must ask the starter for permission to cross.

Wave your hands and call out until the starter notices you and asks what you want.

- Sometimes a boat official may need to give you special instructions. For example, if it is very windy he might tell you to keep to one particular side of your lane as he calls you across to line up for the start. There will be a reason for the instructions – in this example, a crosswind could be moving boats sideways.

If you don't understand, wave your arms to attract attention and ask him to repeat what he said.

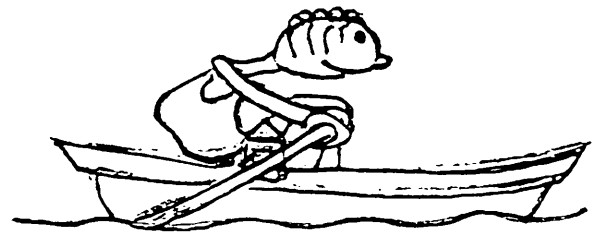
Listen carefully and do as you're told.

- Important: You can be given a false start in rowing, just as you can in many other sports, but in rowing you can get your false start before you even get near the starting line!

If you have arrived late, come onto the course without permission, are not dressed correctly, have been rude to an official or another competitor (heaven forbid!), or disobeyed a direct instruction you can be penalised.

You would usually be warned: '... if you don't ... I will have to give you a false start'.

Two false starts or warnings and you will be disqualified, so take care!



In your lane, waiting for the start

- Sometimes you will be called straight to the starting line, but often the officials will get you lined up for your race further back down the course before the previous race has started. Then when the time comes for your race you are in your correct position and will just have to move slowly up the course onto the starting line – that's when all that practice sitting still in one spot pays off!

Whichever happens, be sure to move into place as soon as you are called — don't keep the other boats waiting.

- Depending on where the Regatta is, boats can be lined up for the start in different ways. On most courses two points are lined up and each side of the starting line marked with buoys.

Where it is more difficult for rowers to line up easily – perhaps because of currents – toggles might be used – ropes hanging down from an overhead rope or a bridge – which rowers hold to help them keep in line until the start.

For 2 000m events at Lake Barrington boats are lined up at a pontoon, with boatholders to keep a light touch on the stern of each boat to help stop them drifting out of line.

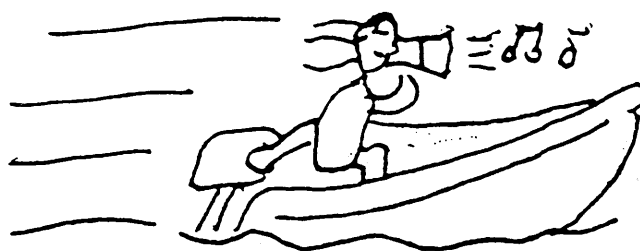
- Keep checking your boat to make sure that you stay straight. It doesn't take much breeze to push you off line and you'll have to work all over again to get straightened up and back in place – possibly keeping other rowers waiting.

Sometimes when everyone is lined up at the start the starter might ask if anyone would mind if the race starts early, even though it may not be due to start for a few more minutes. That happens for two reasons:

- a) so that you won't have to sit keeping your boat steady for longer than necessary, and
- b) it's easy for a busy program to get behind time so the officials may try to make up a few minutes here and there.

Usually crews don't mind and the race will be started ahead of time, but if for some reason you don't want to start early, say so. For instance, you may have hurried to get to the start and want the extra time to get your breath back — you don't have to start ahead of the proper time, so don't hesitate to speak up.

- If there is something wrong, wave and shout so the officials will notice and know that you need to talk to them. Sitting quietly with one hand up is not enough.
- If you're spoken to by the starter or by a boat umpire, respond — with a wave of your hand, a shout, or at least a vigorous nod or shake of your head — so they know you've heard what was said.



The Start

- All crews are due on the starting line two minutes before the event is scheduled to start. Any boat which arrives late will be given a warning, or false start — the terms mean the same thing: two false starts and you will be disqualified from the results.
- If you have any problems with your boat or your crew you should signal to the boat officials and it may be possible to delay the start while your problem is sorted out.
- When the starter announces 'two minutes' it indicates that that the course is closed and that crews should prepare to race. During that two minutes the starter will check that all crews are lined up in their correct position and will make any necessary adjustments to the position of boats on the line.
Those adjustments are made by calling on individual boats to move up onto the line or back into line with the others. That's when it is important to be able to move your boat backwards and forwards quickly and efficiently so other boats don't have to wait too long — in a breeze that can make things difficult for everyone.
- When all boats are properly lined up the starter will make a roll call of all boats in the event, e.g. 'Lindisfarne, Ulverstone, Huon, Tamar.' During the roll call boats must be kept straight and ready to race — once the roll call begins the starter will not stop for any crew which signals that it is not ready.
At the end of the roll call the starter will call 'Attention . . . Go.'
For a toggle start the Starter will call 'Drop your toggles . . . Attention . . . Go'
At the 2 000m starting pontoon at Lake Barrington lights are also used: as the starter calls 'Attention' a red light will come on, followed by a green light as he says 'Go'.