HOTL 2026 HANDBOOK

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Saturday, October 31, 2026

3:00-6:00 PM	Pickup for race packets pre-sale merchandise at *Lake Washington Rowing Club*
2:00 PM	Trailer parking opens at *UW Lot E18*

Sunday, November 1, 2026

2:00 AM	PDT Ends. Clocks fall back one hour
6:00 AM-8:00AM	Race packet pick-up at *Conibear Shell House*
6:30AM-1:00PM	Regatta merchandise for sale at *Conibear Shell House*
8:00 AM-12:30 PM	Racing from *Lake Union to Union Bay*

For updates to the regatta and information regarding registration, regatta fees, parking, trailers, and directions please visit Regatta Central or the Head of the Lake homepage.

GENERAL RULES

RACE PACKETS

Race packets will be available at Lake Washington Rowing Club from 3:00 to 6:00 PM on the Saturday prior to the race. We **STRONGLY** urge that race packets be picked up on Saturday rather than Sunday morning at Conibear. Packets include numbered bibs to be worn on the backs of both the bow person (large number) and coxswain (small number). Crews without a bow number will not receive a recorded race time. Bow number markers will be provided. **RETURN ALL BOW MARKERS:** deposit bow markers to the marked boxes at the launch sites, return to a volunteer race official on the dock, or return to the Lake Washington Rowing Club boathouse.

AWARDS

First place medals commemorating the HOTL race course will be awarded for each event. Second place medals will be awarded for all junior/U17 events regardless of number of entries and all collegiate and open events with at least ten entries. First place winners for Masters events will be determined using the age-handicapped time. Masters events that span multiple age groups will additionally have first place medals awarded for the fastest raw time. Awards will be distributed at the Award table inside Conibear once race results are official. While there is no formal awards ceremony, a backdrop will be available for crews wishing to take pictures, and selected HOTL trophies will be available at the Award table. HOTL trophies are engraved with the names of individual or team awardees and remain on display at LWRC.

USROWING COMPLIANCE

As Head of the Lake is a USRowing-registered regatta, participating organizations and athletes must meet USRowing waiver, membership, and SafeSport requirements. US-based organizations with participating athletes must have an active organizational membership with USRowing. Additionally, all athletes participating at HOTL must:

1. Hold an active USRowing membership at a minimum of the Basic membership level. Athletes

competing as Unaffiliated must hold Championship-level membership.
2. Have an active USRowing membership agreement (i.e., signed waiver).
3. US adults (18 and over) must have an active SafeSport attestation, and, if determined to be a Relevant Adult participant, complete SafeSport training.

USRowing membership, waiver, and SafeSport attestation and training are renewed annually and must be unexpired as of the date of the regatta. These requirements may be completed online via the USRowing Membership Portal. Non-US athletes may process the free International membership in order to sign the USRowing waiver.

RACE PACKETS WILL NOT BE DISTRIBUTED FOR LINEUPS WITH OUTSTANDING COMPLIANCE ISSUES. Athletes will not be permitted to race if they do not meet the above requirements. Participants are **STRONGLY** encouraged to check for and resolve compliance issues well in advance of the regatta. If you encounter issues, contact USRowing member support at members@usrowing.org or 609-751-0700. Member Services is available to respond Monday through Friday, 9AM-4:30PM Eastern Time.

MANDATORY PRE-RACE MEETING

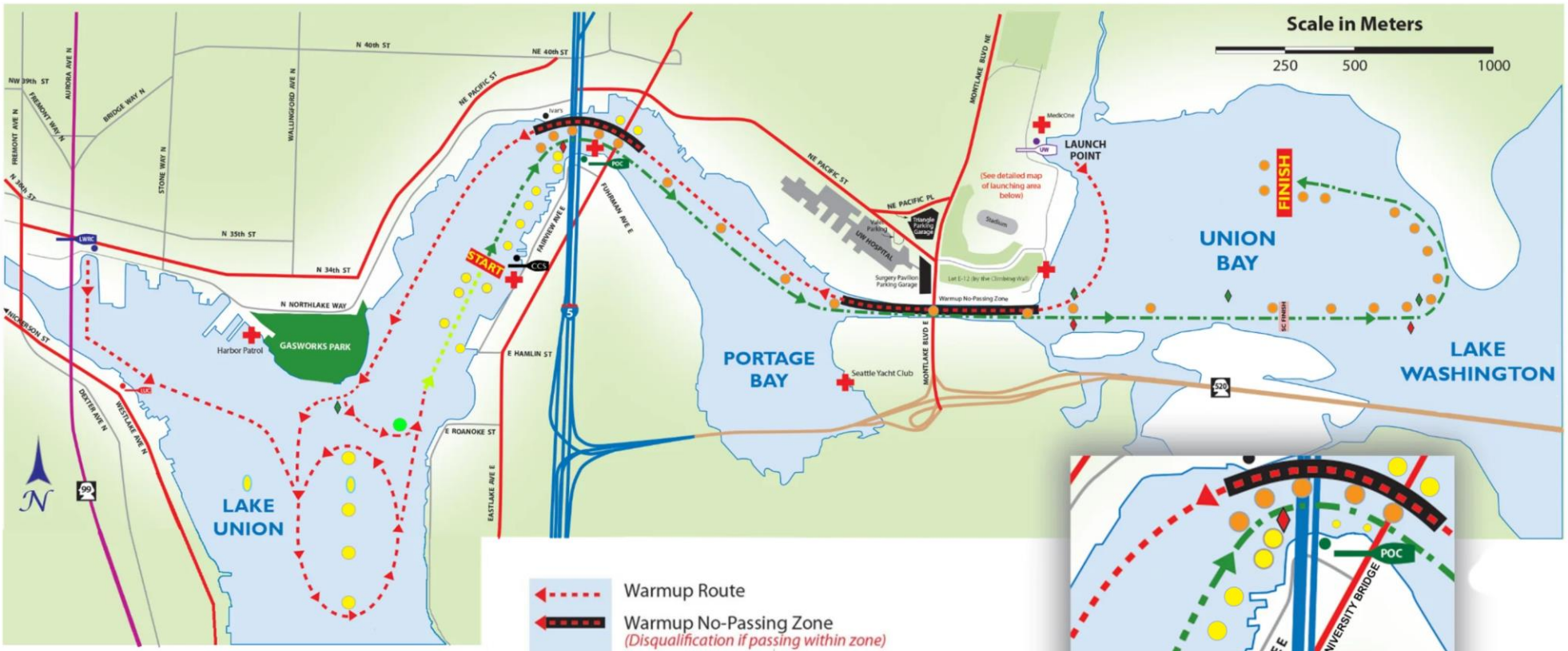
Attending or viewing the pre-race meeting is mandatory for all coxswains, coaches, and bows. For reference only, a recording of the last year's pre-race meeting is available online. A recording of this year's meeting will be posted in the evening after the meeting.

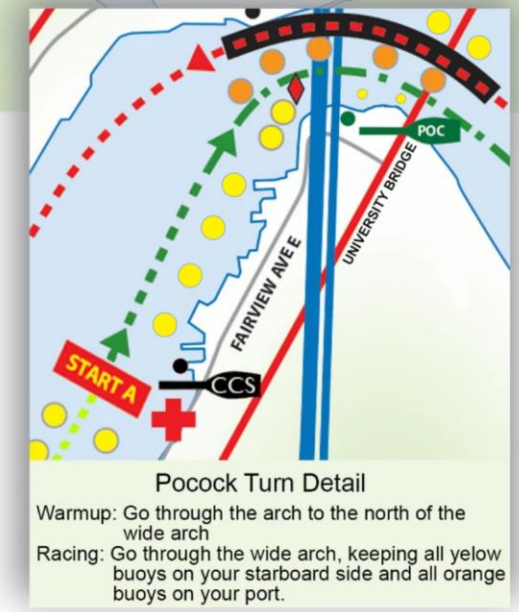
EQUIPMENT

1. Respect for the safety of other competitors and their equipment must be observed at all times.
2. Bow balls and bow numbers are required for any boat preparing to race. Boats without bow balls will not be allowed on the race course. Boats shall also be fitted with a bow clip to attach a bow number. The regatta will supply bow numbers. Boats without a bow clip to attach a number may be prohibited from racing.
3. Bow Coxed Shells: All bow-coxed shells must meet the Rules of Rowing requirements regarding the size of the opening through which the coxswain enters the shell.
4. Shoes must have heel tie-downs restricting heel lift to 3 inches (7.5 cm).
5. Crews are expected to wear matching race shirts or tops. **DRESS APPROPRIATLY FOR THE WEATHER.** Warm layers do not need to match.

LAUNCHING

1. Crews will receive launching and landing directions from the dock masters at Conibear Shellhouse and Lake Washington Rowing Club. **NO CREWS WILL BE PERMITTED TO LAUNCH FROM CONIBEAR BEFORE 7:10AM, UNLESS OTHERWISE DIRECTED BY A DOCKMASTER.**
2. Launching will be in the order of events. Please allow your crews ample time to launch. The lines are especially long at the Conibear Shellhouse, so allow extra time to launch from this location. At the discretion of the dock masters, crews may be asked to wait for other crews that need to launch for events that precede the waiting crews' events. Bow balls and heel tie downs must be checked by a dock master.
3. Arrange for assistants to carry oars and collect shoes before you approach the dock. Adjustments and tie-ins should be done on the water. Returning boats at Conibear will be recovered from the North dock.
4. Only those crews currently established at Pocock Rowing Center and College Club will be allowed to launch from these locations.
5. Boats launching from the west side of Lake Union must join the warm-up loop heading south. Boats may only cross directly to the start line with the permission of a warm-up marshal.





Pocock Turn Detail

Warmup: Go through the arch to the north of the wide arch

Racing: Go through the wide arch, keeping all yelow buoys on your starboard side and all orange buoys on your port.

Warmup Route

Warmup No-Passing Zone
(Disqualification if passing within zone)

Racing Lane

Staging Queue

Race Buoys

2-ton Channel Buoys

Permanent Yellow Pencil Buoys

Local Boathouses

Emergency Take Out Locations

The following will result in exclusion of a crew from the event. Refer to the Racing Rules section for the full list of penalties and penalty codes.

- Stopping or holding down while making a turn.
- Racing shell crossing over the port side buoy line at the Pocock turn.
- Passing in a Warmup No-Passing Zone.
- Failure to yield or interference with another crew resulting in contact.
- Missing the event (crew will not be permitted to race)
- Bow number is not visible (crew will not receive a race time)
- Flagrant disregard for rules or safety may result in **disqualification of the rower or crew** from the regatta

TIME PENALTIES

- Missing a buoy - **10" per buoy**
- Failure to yield while being passed - **60"**
- Interference with another crew - **60"**
- Unsafe pass - **60"**
- Traffic pattern violation - **60"**

HEAD OF THE LAKE


PARKING ENTRANCE (ALL VEHICLES)
HEAD OF THE LAKE
South-bound trailers follow the route with the red arrows on the map.
North-bound trailers follow the route with the blue arrows on the map.
All trailers will park in lot E18.
PARKING ENTRANCE (ALL VEHICLES)
TRAILER PARKING (WEST E18)
E1
E1
E18
E18
E2
N25
NO ENTRANCE
E8
E6
E9
E15RV
E12
E12 GRASS
E12 Disability
E17
GRAVES
N24
N24
N24
C12
C12
C12
C12
C10
C10
C10
N5
N1
W14
W12
UW Tower Garage A
UW Tower Garage B
Husky Stadium
Union Bay
Lake Washington
Ship Canal
Portage Bay
Rainier Vista NE
Suzzallo Library
Odegaard Undergrad Library
Husky Union Building (HUB)
Intramural Activities
Dempsey Indoor Center
Nordstrom Tennis Center
Edmundson Pavilion
Graves Annex
Pavilion Pool
Women's Softball Field
Waterfront Activities Center
Climbing Rock
Outdoor Performance Theatre
Wayne Gittinger Baseball Team Building
Husky Outdoor Track
IMA Sports Field #1 East
IMA Sports Field #1 West
IMA Sports Field #2
IMA Sports Field #3
Soccer Field
Denny Field IMA
Denny Yard
Quad
HUB Yard
Petersen
Viaduct
University Link Light Rail Station Construction
UWMC Roosevelt I
UWMC Roosevelt II
Lander Hall Residence 2014
Mercer Court Apts. Opening Fall 2013
Magnuson Health Sciences Center
University of Washington Medical Center
UWMC Montlake Pavilion
Burke Museum History & Culture
Henry Art Gallery
UW Tower
Bookstore
Brotman (U-PerW Police)
E
N
S
W

THE RACE COURSE

Head of the Lake is a three-mile (4.8-kilometer) race with a wide, three-point buoyed turn near the finish. The race starts in Lake Union at the College Club dock with views of the Seattle Skyline and the Space Needle and follows the shoreline heading north past Pocock Rowing Center and under the University Bridge. It continues east through Portage Bay and through the Montlake Cut into Union Bay. After passing Fox Point (the Lake Washington Arboretum) still heading toward Lake Washington, the course follows a multi-buoyed turn heading north and then continues northwest towards Husky Stadium and Conibear Shell House. The finish line is 750 meters from the docks at the Conibear Shell House.

Participants should review the course map and be prepared to ask questions at the coaches/coxswains meeting. Do not rely on the crew ahead of you to know the course. Keep a sharp eye for possible on-coming traffic and/or boats that have overturned or stopped. As always, use common sense and stay safe. The red travel lines and arrows signify the warm-up lanes and the green travel lines and arrows signify the race lane. In the event of inclement weather or poor conditions on Lake Washington, the course will be shortened as indicated on the map.

THE COURSE

Crews can enter the starting chute after rowing past Gas Works Park or from the south end of Lake Union. Follow the directions of the referees and race officials stationed in the warm-up area and the starter.

After crossing the starting line (following the green racing line on the map) head toward the red channel buoy. NOTE: all channel buoys will cause serious damage in the event of a collision. **DO NOT TRAVEL BETWEEN THE RED CHANNEL BUOY AND THE SHORE**. The best racing line is to turn as close as possible to the red channel buoy, keeping it on your starboard side, and continue through the University Bridge, keeping the course buoys on your port side. **THIS IS THE MOST DANGEROUS TURN OF THE RACE.** ALL CREWS NEED TO TAKE GREAT CARE WHEN NEGOTIATING THIS TURN. Pay particular attention to crews launching and returning to Pocock Rowing Center. These crews should NOT be moving onto the race course without the direction of race officials; do not assume they will be paying attention!

After passing under the University Bridge, follow the green racing line into Portage Bay. Keep the course buoys on your port side as you continue towards the west end of the Montlake Cut. Entering the Montlake Cut, stay close to the south (starboard) side of much as possible. Continue keeping the course buoys on your port side.

As you exit the Montlake Cut, keep the large red channel buoy on your starboard side and the course buoys on your port side. Follow the green line of travel east past Fox Point toward Lake Washington, keeping the course buoys and the green channel buoy on your port side. While maintaining your course east toward the start of the large multi-buoy turn, keep the large red channel buoy on your starboard side and the course buoy on your port side. After going through both of these buoys you should begin turning to port, keeping ALL BUOYS ON YOUR PORT SIDE.

Finish Line: Continue toward the finish line, keeping the course buoys on your port side. Row between the last two buoys at the finish line. After you cross the finish line DO NOT STOP ROWING until you are clear of the finishing area and any other crews finishing behind you.

SHORT COURSE

In case of inclement weather, the finish line will be just off Fox Point past the green channel buoy. The rest of the race course will be unchanged. If the course is shortened during an event, final times will be taken from Fox Point for all crews in the event. A map of the short course is available on the Head of the Lake website.

RACING RULES

GENERAL RULES OF RACING

1. All turns must be made with the entire crew rowing. If you stop or hold down while making a turn, you will be excluded from the event. NOTE: A crew may stop without penalty to avoid colliding with another crew/boat.
2. Where buoys mark the boundaries of the course, a crew shall be penalized ten seconds for each buoy that they pass incorrectly.
3. Any competitor showing a flagrant disregard or intentional violation of rules concerning safety or fairness and/or failing to follow the instructions of US Rowing Referees, Marshals, or Dock Masters at any time during the race may be disqualified from the regatta.
4. Fours, eights and coxed quads must have the coxswain on board during the entire race.
5. Good sportsmanship is expected at all times.

TRAFFIC PATTERN (ALL BOATS)

IMPORTANT FOR RACING and ROWING UNDER THE UNIVERSITY BRIDGE Without exception, ALL crews heading toward Lake Union to the start or returning after racing (and before the regatta is completely over) must use the northern most opening (shore side, across from Pocock Rowing Center) of the University Bridge. You will want to reduce your speed as you approach. There is adequate room to pass one shell at a time through this opening. The middle or main opening is for RACING ONLY.

1. If the racing shell of any crew or individual rower crosses over the outside (port) buoy line, while taking the "Pocock turn" (rowing under the I-5 and University bridge), the crew or rower will be excluded.
2. Boats must keep to the right/starboard side of the waterway at all times during the race and follow the established buoy marked course. In areas where there are no buoys, boats should keep to the right of the waterway. Traffic patterns should be observed during practice just as during the race. Refer to the regatta map.
3. A detailed review of the race course and traffic patterns will be presented at the coach/ coxswain meeting. It is crucial that at least one representative from your organization attends this briefing. There is always the possibility of last minute changes in the course layout and/or implementation of regatta procedures. Note: there is no guarantee that the HOTL course will run the same as in past years.
4. Your safety is the referees' primary responsibility. The established traffic pattern is critical to everyone's safety. It prevents crews from running into items found on the race course, like bridge abutments, piers extending into the waterway, navigation buoys, etc. You are expected to be knowledgeable of these items before you launch.
5. Any boat that steers into a lane of on-coming traffic either when racing or when using the travel lane will be penalized and possibly excluded. Head-on collisions at race pace can result in serious injury. You MUST NOT presume that the other boat sees or hears you and will move out of your way.
6. Each boat has the responsibility for remaining keenly aware of its surroundings. Stern-coxed shells have a large blind spot directly in front of the coxswain. Bow coxed shells have a blind spot directly behind the coxswain and are vulnerable to interference challenges with crews attempting to pass. Work out a communication plan between the coxswain and the immediately adjacent oarsperson. Rowers should keep their coxswains aware of things that they may be unable to see or hear from their position in the boat.
7. Boats racing have the right of way over all other boats. A boat proceeding in line with the direction of the waterway has the right of way over a boat crossing the waterway. Great care should be taken when turning or crossing the race course. During racing, boats launching from and returning to Pocock Rowing Center and College Club boathouses will be asked to follow specific instructions from the dock masters and referees.
8. WARM-UP LANES: While traveling through the Montlake Cut and the area around the University Bridge there is a strict **no-passing rule** in effect. The warm-up lane extends from the entrance of Conibear Shell house in Union Bay to the east side of Gas Works Park in Lake Union. Crews should follow the established traffic pattern as best as

possible. You may pass other crews while warming up except in the following two (2) locations:

a. Full length of the Montlake Cut (Waterfront Activities Center to UW Hospital)
b. 100 meters east of the University Bridge to the south end of Ivars Restaurant. This is a single file lane under the shore side of the University Bridge.

THESE TWO (2) WARM-UP LANES ARE SINGLE FILE ONLY. Crews passing another crew in either lane while warming up may be excluded. However, if they are forced into a passing situation by another crew the referee will determine the appropriate action to take. Crews entering the warm-up lanes while racing and crews entering the racing lane while warming up may be excluded from the race, depending on the circumstances of the violation as viewed by the referee.

POCOCK ROWING CENTER & COLLEGE CLUB SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

LAUNCHING & RETURNING There is a white buoy line between the racing lane and the launching docks. You must remain in this area until you are given verbal instructions to cross the racing lane and traffic pattern from the Marshal and the dock master. Be prepared to cross immediately when signaled. Crossing will only be allowed during breaks in the race schedule. Be prepared for a long wait and keep yourself and your crews within the buoyed wait area.

WARM-UP AREA IN LAKE UNION

The warm-up area in Lake Union is counter-clockwise. A good rule of thumb is to use the Space Needle as your point after passing Gas Works Park. Once you are in the south end of the lake, continue in a counter-clockwise pattern. There will be Race Marshals to help guide you into the starting chute. **BOATS IN THE WARM-UP AREA MUST COMPLETE FULL LAPS.**

STARTING PROCEDURE

1. The start line is located at College Club on the northeast shore of Lake Union.
2. Be in the Lake Union staging area 10 minutes prior to your start time.
3. Prepare to start in bow-number order and follow the instructions of the Race Marshall. Crews arriving late to their start may face either a reprimand or a warning. Directions from the Starter must be followed at all times. Late arriving boats may not cross the line of buoys to jump into the starting sequence, but should wait for instructions from the Marshal or the Starter. Boats that arrive late may be allowed to start behind their assigned position in their event at the discretion of the Starter. (Refer also to #7).
4. Look for other boats in your event and move into the starting chute together. Crews shall be responsible for maintaining the proper order and the proper distance between their boats, and for staying within the chute as they approach the starting line.
5. Once each event is underway all shells will move as a column toward the starting chute. **Crews should be in bow number order, with even numbers on starboard and odd numbers on port.** Allow crews in your event with lower bow numbers to pass you as you head toward the start chute.
6. The starting chute comprises two lines of buoys approximately 100 meters long and 30 meters apart. The Start Marshal will call crews through the chute one boat at a time. Wait for the command before beginning to accelerate towards the starting line. Do not begin moving towards the starting line until instructed to do so. You will be called to row down the chute at 10-15 second intervals via a megaphone.
7. Any crew or individual rower that misses their event will NOT be allowed to race.

PASSING

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OVERTAKING BOAT (PASSER)
Passing is defined as one boat overtaking another when the Passer has moved within one length of open water of the crew they want to pass.

1. If it is safe to pass, the overtaking crew has the right to chose which side they want to pass on. If a pass is attempted, and there is neither adequate room nor time to perform the pass safely, the overtaking boat must delay the act of passing. If you are passing next to the single-file warm-up lanes, you may not cross the buoy line into the warm-up lanes during any part of the race. If you force the boat you are

passing into or across the buoy line you, the Passer, may be excluded.
2. The Passer must allow time for the boat that they are overtaking to safely yield. If the passing boat does not yield when safety is a factor and if they cause a collision or injury to another rower during the process, a penalty or exclusion will be assessed.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOAT BEING OVERTAKEN

1. The boat being passed must yield the line taken by the passing boat as quickly as possible. Movement to yield must begin when the passing boat is within one length of open water.
2. Always be alert to possible upcoming passing attempts, be prepared to decrease speed to allow the Passer to pass safely and without interference. All shells coxed from the bow are advised to have their bow seat rower notify the coxswain when a following crew is positioning themselves to attempt to pass and on which side of the boat they will be passing.

THE FINISH

The finish line is located 750 meters in front of the Conibear Shell house. A finish line dock is positioned there. As you pass the finish line a horn will sound, signifying that you have crossed the finish line. Keep rowing away from the finish area to allow space for the crews behind you to cross the finish line safely. Do not allow the finish area to become a collision zone.

PROTESTS & PENALTIES

Every section of the course will be staffed by licensed US Rowing referees. Their decisions regarding calls and penalties that are protested are final. If you have an issue that you feel impacted your race or a question about a penalty you may submit an inquiry or formal protest within one hour of the conclusion of your race using this online **form**. In the case of a protest, a jury of race marshals and referees will review your protest and render a decision. One may consult with you directly to explain their decision. You must additionally pay the $50 penalty protest fee:

- by check payable to Lake Washington Rowing Club and delivered to the Rose Room at Conibear;
- or by **submitting payment online** and emailing the receipt to hotl@lakewashingtonrowing.com.

Failure to Yield, **Interference** and **Traffic Pattern Violations** are determined by the referees. Interference and Failure to Yield penalties are not subject to protest.

Reprimand: A reprimand shall consist of an informal caution and shall have no immediate effect upon a crew. Subsequent behavior by the crew inconsistent with the terms of the reprimand, however, may be evidence that the crew acted flagrantly or intentionally.

Warning: A crew that receives two warnings applying to the same race shall be excluded. All warnings shall expire and be of no further effect once the race to which they apply has been successfully completed.

Exclusion: A boat that is excluded shall be removed from the event. In a head race, the excluded boat will not receive a time.

Disqualification: A boat that is disqualified shall be removed from racing at the regatta. Disqualification shall be appropriate when a boat has acted in a flagrant or intentional violation of rules concerning safety or fairness. In no event shall the duration of the disqualification exceed the duration of the regatta. All cases of disqualification shall be reported to USRowing Referee Committee.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	PENALTY
OOX	Missed event	Exclusion
IN	Invisible number (if a crew can be identified at start and finish a time will be given)	No race time
CBX	Cross buoy line and interfere with racing crews	Exclusion
FCX	Force crew into opposite traffic	Exclusion
MB	Missed buoy	10 seconds per buoy
HDX	Hold down on turn (unless necessary to avoid collision - referee judgment is final)	Exclusion
FY*	Failure to yield while being passed	60 seconds
FYX*	Failure to yield with contact	Exclusion
IF*	Interference	60 seconds
IFX*	Interference with contact	Exclusion
UP*	Unsafe pass	60 seconds
UPX*	Unsafe pass with contact	Exclusion
NPX	Pass in no-pass zone	Exclusion
DRX	Flagrant disregard for rules	Disqualification
FFX	Failure to follow instructions	Exclusion
LRX	Leave rower in water alone	Exclusion
TP	Traffic pattern violation	60 seconds
TPX	Traffic pattern violation with collision	Exclusion

* **Interference.** Interference with another boat, whether failing to yield safely to allow a boat to pass (intentionally blocking the path of the passing boat) or the passing boat not allowing time for the boat they are passing to safely yield will result in a penalty being assessed. It will be at the referee's discretion as to the penalty assessed.

SAFETY PLAN

It is our desire for all competitors to have a fun and safe regatta. To help ensure this indeed is the case, numerous safety measures have been taken. The course is on a public waterway, and although vessels travelling through the area have been notified via Notice to Mariners that a race is being held, we cannot guarantee they will wait to enter the course until given permission to do so. Seattle Harbor Patrol and race launches will do their best to monitor these situations.

COURSE ALTERATIONS

Any decision to use an alternate course due to weather conditions course will be made by the regatta race committee on the morning of the race and announced through public communication channels. Any decision to change the course (as outlined in the regatta map) will be made in utmost consideration of athletes' safety. The Chief Referee will coordinate input concerning course changes.

DRESS FOR THE WEATHER

Plan for all weather conditions. Seattle weather in early November is typically wet and cold, so it's best to dress in layers and bring a change of clothing. As an athlete on the water, it is highly recommended that you bring a jacket or fleece, hat or long pants in the boat with you.

THUNDER OR LIGHTNING

In the event of thunder or lightning, participants should go to the nearest shore location and seek shelter indoors. This may be at Conibear, Pocock Rowing Club, College Club, or other local boathouses.

FIRST AID

First aid and medical emergencies will be handled by Medic One. A mobile unit will be located just outside Conibear Shell house. If you see an emergency on land, alert the nearest on-water launch volunteer, course referee, dock master or regatta personnel. If life threatening, call 911. Describe the emergency. State the location, state the nature of the incident and the number of people involved. Stay calm; help will be on the way immediately. There is a dedicated radio network for the regatta that will and can be used for emergency situations. If possible, prevent people from interfering with response efforts.

ON-WATER EMERGENCIES

For all on-water emergencies, the closest safety or referees launch responding on scene will be in charge and will have direct contact with all regatta personnel, including the Seattle Harbor Patrol. NOTE: When a problem arises the referee will raise a white flag if the mishap (overturned shell, rower in the water) occurs on the race course where shells may be passing. The referee may signal you to steer to one side, in which case the white flag is dropped or waived to the preferred side. **STOP RACING IF YOU SEE A RED FLAG.** Move to the nearest referee or rescue launch for further instructions. If you overturn or are ejected from your shell and wish to continue racing, you must re-enter your shell and resume rowing before a launch reaches you. If that launch reaches you, you have been in the water too long and you will be taken off the water to get dry and warm and get checked over by an EMT. **IF YOU ARE EJECTED FROM YOUR SHELL, YOUR ENTIRE CREW MUST REMAIN WITH YOU OR YOUR ENTIRE CREW WILL BE EXCLUDED.**

All safety launches are equipped with PFDs blankets, and cell phones. For all other situations, remain calm and follow the directions of the referee or safety launch driver in charge. The Referee/Safety Launch in all areas of the race course will either move to assist or move to cover the position vacated by the Referee/Safety launch responding to the emergency. The Referee/Safety launch will monitor the regatta traffic in their areas, coordinate the positioning and actions of the other referees in their area and monitor conditions affecting racing.