2027 POCONOS DRAGON BOAT RACE

Official Race and Festival Rules and Guidelines

These Rules govern participation in the 2027 Poconos Dragon Boat Race & Festival sponsored by Paddle for Purpose ("Event"). All teams, paddlers, drummers, coaches, managers, and team representatives are expected to know and comply with these Rules.

The purpose of these Rules is to promote safe, fair, competitive, and enjoyable racing. The Event is a community-oriented dragon boat competition. These Rules are intended to provide a practical framework for competition and are not intended to incorporate every technical rule applicable to national or international championship racing.

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1. RACE AUTHORITY

1.1 Race Director

The Race Director has overall authority for the conduct of racing and for the interpretation and application of these Rules.

The Race Director may make such decisions as are reasonably necessary to preserve safety, fairness, and the orderly operation of the Event.

1.2 Modification of Race Procedures

The Race Director may modify the race schedule, course, race format, starting procedure, lane assignments, advancement procedures, or other competition requirements because of:

- weather or water conditions;
- safety concerns;
- equipment availability;
- delays;
- the number of participating teams;
- emergency conditions; or
- other circumstances affecting the safe or efficient conduct of the Event.

1.3 Final Decisions

Except where a protest procedure is specifically provided below, decisions of the Race Director and designated race officials are final.

Situations not specifically addressed by these Rules will be resolved by the Race Director in a manner intended to promote safety, fairness, sportsmanship, and orderly competition.

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2. DIVISIONS

Teams shall register in one of the divisions offered by the Event:

- Community
- Sport/Club
- Senior
- BCS-ACS-PARA

Teams are responsible for selecting the division that most accurately reflects the composition, experience, training, and competitive activity of their crew.

2.1 Community Division

The Community Division is intended primarily for recreational, novice, corporate, charitable, civic, neighborhood, and other teams that do not train or compete in dragon boat racing on a regular basis.

Community teams generally:

- paddle primarily for recreation, camaraderie, fitness, community participation, or charitable purposes;
- consist predominantly of novice or recreational paddlers;
- do not practice together on a regular or year-round basis;
- may receive limited training or coaching in preparation for the Event; and
- have either never competed in dragon boat racing or compete only periodically in community or festival events.

Participation in occasional dragon boat races does not, by itself, prevent a team from competing in the Community Division.

A team whose paddlers regularly train and compete together as an established dragon boat club or competitive racing team should register in the Sport/Club Division.

All Community Division crews are mixed crews.

2.2 Sport/Club Division

The Sport/Club Division is intended for established dragon boat clubs and other competitive teams that train and compete on a regular basis.

Sport/Club teams generally:

- practice dragon boat technique, conditioning, or both on a regular basis;
- contain a substantial number of experienced dragon boat paddlers;
- train together during the racing season or throughout the year; and
- participate regularly in dragon boat regattas, club competitions, championships, or similar competitive events.

Sport/Club competition may include mixed, women's, and men's classifications, depending upon registration.

2.3 Classification of Teams

Paddle for Purpose reserves the right to review a team's division classification.

If the Race Director determines that a team has registered in a division that does not reasonably reflect the team's experience, training, or competitive history, the Race Director may reclassify the team into the more appropriate division.

In making that determination, the Race Director may consider:

- frequency of team practices;
- frequency and level of competition;
- prior race participation;
- whether the team is an established dragon boat club;
- the experience of the paddlers comprising the crew; and
- any other information reasonably relevant to maintaining fair competition.

The presence of individual experienced paddlers on an otherwise recreational Community team does not automatically require classification as a Sport/Club team.

The Race Director's classification decision is final.

2.4 Senior Division

Senior competition will follow the age classifications and eligibility standards established by the United States Dragon Boat Federation ("USDBF") in effect at the time of the Event.

The specific Senior classifications offered will depend upon the number and composition of registered Senior teams.

Senior competition may include mixed, women's, and men's classifications.

Paddle for Purpose may combine Senior classifications when reasonably necessary because of registration levels, provided that any such change is communicated to affected teams before competition.

2.5 BCS-ACS-PARA Division

All paddlers competing in the BCS Division must be breast cancer survivors. Any additional BCS eligibility requirements established by Paddle for Purpose will be communicated to registered teams before race day.

ACS Division teams must be comprised of cancer survivors.

PARA Division Teams will follow USDBF guidelines.

2.6 Division Adjustments

The Event may combine, subdivide, or modify divisions or classifications when reasonably necessary because of the number of entries or other operational considerations.

Any material change will be communicated to affected teams whenever practicable.

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3. TEAM ROSTERS AND ELIGIBILITY

3.1 Team Roster

Each team must submit a complete roster in the form and by the deadline established by Paddle for Purpose.

Only properly registered participants may participate in racing.

3.2 Participant Eligibility

Each participant must:

- satisfy the eligibility requirements for the division in which the participant is racing;
- complete all required registration, waiver, and release documentation;
- comply with Event safety requirements; and
- follow the instructions of race officials and Event personnel.

3.3 Roster Changes

Roster changes may be permitted before racing begins subject to approval by Event officials.

The Race Director may allow emergency substitutions during the Event when circumstances warrant.

3.4 Participation on Multiple Teams

A participant may compete on more than one team only to the extent permitted by the Event schedule and any division-specific rules.

The Event will not delay a race because a participant is competing with another team.

It is the responsibility of the participant and Team Captain to avoid scheduling conflicts.

3.5 Ineligible Participants

Use of an ineligible, unregistered, or unauthorized participant may result in a time penalty, loss of race result, disqualification, or other sanction determined by the Race Director.

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4. TEAM COMPOSITION

4.1 Community Division

A Community Division racing crew shall consist of:

- sixteen (16) paddlers; and
- one (1) drummer.

The Event will provide the steersperson.

All Community Division crews are mixed. No more than fifty percent (50%) of the paddlers in the boat may be men. Accordingly, a Community crew of sixteen (16) paddlers may include no more than eight (8) men.

The drummer and Event-provided steersperson are not included in determining the gender composition of the paddling crew.

4.2 Sport/Club, Senior, BCS-ACS-PARA Divisions

A racing crew in the Sport/Club, Senior, or BCS-ACS-PARA Division shall consist of:

- twenty (20) paddlers; and
- one (1) drummer.

The Event will provide the steersperson.

Sport/Club, BCS-ACS-PARA and Senior competition may include mixed, women's, and men's classifications.

For any mixed Sport/Club or Senior crew, no more than fifty percent (50%) of the paddlers in the boat may be men. Accordingly, a twenty-paddler mixed crew may include no more than ten (10) men.

The drummer and Event-provided steersperson are not included in determining the gender composition of the paddling crew.

4.3 Drummer

Each team is responsible for providing its own drummer.

The drummer must comply with all safety requirements and instructions of race officials.

4.4 Steerspersons

Steerspersons will be provided by the Event.

Teams may not substitute their own steersperson unless specifically authorized by the Race Director.

The Event-provided steersperson is considered a race official for purposes of safety and boat control. Teams must comply with the steersperson's instructions relating to navigation, safety, boat handling, and emergency procedures.

4.5 Reduced Crew Size

The Race Director may, in exceptional circumstances, permit a team to compete with fewer than the required number of paddlers if doing so does not create a safety concern or an unfair competitive advantage.

Any such decision is within the sole discretion of the Race Director.

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5. TEAM CAPTAIN

Each team shall designate a Team Captain.

The Team Captain is the official representative of the team and is responsible for:

- ensuring that team members understand these Rules;
- ensuring timely attendance at check-in and marshalling;
- communicating with race officials;
- receiving official notices affecting the team;
- submitting any protest on behalf of the team; and
- promoting appropriate conduct by team members and supporters.

Race officials may rely upon communications made to the Team Captain as communications to the entire team.

6. EQUIPMENT

6.1 Race Equipment

Boats and other race equipment designated by the Event will be provided or approved by the Event organizer or race management provider.

Teams may not alter, modify, adjust, or add equipment to a race boat without authorization from a race official.

6.2 Paddles

Paddles will be made available by the Event.

Participants may use their own personal paddles provided that the paddles are USDBF-approved and are acceptable to race officials.

Race officials may prohibit the use of any paddle they determine does not comply with applicable requirements or presents a safety concern.

6.3 Personal Flotation Devices

All paddlers, drummers, and steerspersons must wear a properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (“PFD”) while aboard a dragon boat.

A participant who refuses to wear the required PFD will not be permitted to participate.

6.4 Equipment Problems

Any equipment problem must be reported immediately to a race official.

A team shall not intentionally damage or misuse Event equipment.

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7. CHECK-IN AND MARSHALLING

7.1 Team Check-In

Teams must check in at the designated registration or race administration area by the announced deadline.

7.2 Marshalling

Teams must report to the designated marshalling area sufficiently in advance of their scheduled race.

Teams must follow all instructions of marshalling officials.

7.3 Late Teams

A team that fails to report when called may lose its opportunity to compete in that race.

Race officials are not required to delay the race schedule for a late team.

The Race Director may permit a late team to race if doing so does not materially disrupt the schedule or prejudice other competitors.

7.4 Boat Loading

Teams shall load and unload boats only when instructed by race officials or dock personnel.

All participants must comply promptly with instructions relating to boat loading, seating, balance, safety, and dock operations.

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8. RACE COURSE AND LANES

The official race distance and course configuration will be established by the Race Director and communicated to teams before competition.

Teams shall race in the lane assigned to them.

Lane assignments may be changed at any time when reasonably necessary because of weather, water conditions, course configuration, safety considerations, or operational needs.

Teams must make reasonable efforts to remain within their assigned racing lane.

Minor deviation from a lane that does not interfere with another crew ordinarily will not result in a penalty.

A team that materially interferes with another crew may be penalized or disqualified.

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9. STARTING PROCEDURE

9.1 Starting Area

Teams shall proceed promptly to the starting area and follow the instructions of race officials.

9.2 Alignment

Boats will be positioned and aligned as directed by the Starter or other designated official.

Teams shall cooperate with officials attempting to establish a fair start.

9.3 Start Commands

The starting commands and procedure will be explained to Team Captains before competition.

Once the Starter begins the starting sequence, crews must be prepared to race.

9.4 False Starts

A crew that starts before the official start signal may be charged with a false start.

Depending upon the circumstances, the Starter or Race Director may:

- recall the race;
- issue a warning;
- assess a time penalty; or
- disqualify a team for repeated or intentional false starts.

9.5 Failure to Follow Starting Instructions

A team that delays the start or repeatedly fails to follow the Starter's instructions may be penalized or disqualified.

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10. CONDUCT DURING THE RACE

10.1 Racing Line

Each crew must make a reasonable effort to maintain a straight course within its assigned lane.

10.2 Interference

A team shall not intentionally impede, obstruct, collide with, or interfere with another crew.

Interference may include, depending upon the circumstances:

- entering another crew's lane;
- forcing another crew materially off course;
- contact between boats or paddles;
- deliberately altering course to obstruct another crew; or
- other conduct that materially affects another team's ability to race.

10.3 Accidental Contact

Not every instance of lane deviation or contact constitutes interference.

Race officials will consider whether the incident was material, avoidable, intentional, and whether it affected the outcome of the race.

10.4 Correcting Course

A crew that leaves its lane should correct course as soon as it can safely do so.

10.5 Official Instructions

Crews must comply immediately with instructions from race officials, Event-provided steerspersons, safety personnel, or rescue personnel.

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11. FINISH AND OFFICIAL RESULTS

11.1 Finish

A boat finishes when the designated portion of the boat used by the official timing system or race officials crosses the finish line.

11.2 Official Timing

Official timing will be determined by the timing system and race officials designated by the Event.

Unofficial times announced or displayed before results are finalized are subject to correction.

11.3 Official Results

Results become official after review by race officials and after expiration or resolution of any applicable protest period.

11.4 Ties

If race officials determine that two teams are tied, the Race Director may:

- declare a tie;
- use available electronic, photographic, or video evidence;
- order a re-race; or
- use another fair method to determine advancement or placement.

The Race Director's determination is final.

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12. RACE FORMAT AND ADVANCEMENT

The final race format and advancement procedures will be determined after registration is substantially complete and the number of teams in each division and classification is known.

The Event may include:

- preliminary heats;
- qualifying races;
- semifinals;
- finals;
- consolation races; or
- another format determined by the Race Director.

The Race Director may establish and modify:

- heat assignments;
- seeding procedures;
- lane assignments;
- advancement criteria;

- semifinal and final structures; and
- procedures for resolving unequal numbers of teams between heats.

The final race format will be communicated to Team Captains before competition.

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13. PENALTIES AND DISQUALIFICATION

Race officials may impose an appropriate sanction for violation of these Rules.

Possible sanctions include:

- warning;
- lane reassignment;
- time penalty;
- loss of placement;
- loss of advancement;
- requirement to re-race;
- disqualification from a race;
- disqualification from a division;
- removal from the Event; or
- another remedy reasonably appropriate to the circumstances.

In determining the appropriate sanction, officials may consider:

- the seriousness of the violation;
- whether the violation was intentional;
- whether the violation affected another team's performance;
- whether the violation created a safety risk;
- whether the team had previously been warned; and
- whether the violation affected the integrity of the competition.

Disqualification may be imposed for serious misconduct without a prior warning.

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14. PROTESTS

14.1 Who May Protest

Only a Team Captain may submit an official protest.

14.2 Grounds for Protest

A protest may concern:

- application of these Rules;
- participant eligibility;
- interference by another crew;
- an alleged procedural error materially affecting a race; or

- another matter that could materially affect the team's official result.

Differences of opinion regarding ordinary judgment calls by race officials generally are not grounds for protest.

14.3 Timing

A protest must be submitted promptly and no later than **15 minutes after the posting or announcement of the result of the race at issue**, unless the Race Director permits additional time for good cause.

14.4 Form of Protest

The protest must identify:

- the team submitting the protest;
- the race involved;
- the specific issue being protested; and
- the relief requested.

The Race Director may require the protest to be submitted in writing.

14.5 Evidence

The Race Director may consider information from:

- race officials;
- timing personnel;
- safety personnel;
- Event-provided steerspersons;
- video or photographic evidence;
- participating teams; and
- other reliable sources.

There is no automatic right to a hearing.

14.6 Protest Decision

The Race Director or designated Race Committee shall decide the protest.

The decision is final.

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15. SAFETY

Safety takes precedence over competition.

15.1 Compliance With Safety Instructions

All participants must comply immediately with instructions from race officials, Event-provided steerspersons, safety personnel, dock personnel, emergency personnel, and rescue personnel.

15.2 Fitness to Participate

Each participant is responsible for determining that the participant is physically capable of safely participating in dragon boat racing.

Participation is voluntary and is undertaken subject to the waivers and releases required by the Event.

15.3 Alcohol and Impairment

No participant may race while impaired by alcohol, cannabis, illegal drugs, medication, or any other substance that materially compromises the participant's ability to participate safely.

The Race Director may prevent any person from participating when there is a reasonable safety concern.

15.4 Dangerous Conduct

Reckless behavior, intentional capsizing, horseplay in or around boats, or other conduct creating an unreasonable safety risk is prohibited.

15.5 Emergency Situations

If a boat capsizes or another emergency occurs, participants shall follow the instructions provided during the safety briefing and the directions of the steersperson and rescue personnel.

Participants should remain with the boat unless instructed otherwise by safety personnel or unless remaining with the boat would create an immediate danger.

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16. WEATHER AND WATER CONDITIONS

Dragon boat racing is an outdoor water activity and may be affected by changing weather and water conditions.

The Race Director may delay, suspend, shorten, relocate, modify, or cancel racing because of:

- lightning;
- high winds;
- heavy rain;
- unsafe water conditions;
- poor visibility;
- extreme temperatures;
- emergency conditions; or
- any other circumstance presenting a reasonable safety concern.

The Race Director may resume racing when conditions permit.

There is no obligation to complete every scheduled race if conditions do not permit safe racing.

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17. INCOMPLETE COMPETITION

If the entire scheduled competition cannot be completed, the Race Director may determine final standings based upon completed races.

Depending upon the circumstances, results may be based upon:

- completed finals;
- semifinal results;
- qualifying times;
- head-to-head results;
- fastest completed times;
- seeding results; or
- another equitable method appropriate to the races that were completed.

The Race Director's determination concerning final standings following an incomplete competition shall be final.

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18. SPORTSMANSHIP AND CONDUCT

The Poconos Dragon Boat Race & Festival is intended to promote competition, community participation, camaraderie, and charitable support.

All participants and team representatives are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and sportsmanlike manner.

The following conduct may result in disciplinary action:

- abusive or threatening behavior;
- harassment of competitors, volunteers, officials, spectators, or vendors;
- deliberate cheating;
- intentional interference with another team;
- refusal to follow reasonable instructions of race officials;
- deliberate damage to Event property or equipment; or
- conduct that materially disrupts the Event.

The Race Director may remove any person from the competition or Event site when reasonably necessary to protect participants, officials, volunteers, spectators, property, or the orderly operation of the Event.

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19. TEAM SUPPORTERS AND SPECTATORS

Teams are responsible for encouraging appropriate behavior by their coaches, managers, guests, and supporters.

Only authorized individuals may enter restricted areas, including:

- marshalling areas;
- docks;
- boat loading areas;
- race-control areas;
- official timing areas; and

- safety or rescue areas.

Interference with officials or race operations by a team's supporters may result in corrective action against the individuals involved and, in serious circumstances, the team.

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20. RULE CHANGES AND OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Paddle for Purpose may amend these Rules before the Event.

Material changes will be communicated to Team Captains or posted through the Event's official communication channels.

Race-day instructions issued by the Race Director, Starter, Chief Official, safety personnel, Event-provided steerspersons, or other authorized race official shall supplement these Rules.

Where a race-day instruction conflicts with these Rules because of safety or operational circumstances, the race-day instruction controls.

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21. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RULES

Participation in the Event constitutes acknowledgment and acceptance of these Rules.

Each Team Captain is responsible for ensuring that team members are aware of the Rules and any supplemental race-day instructions.

Failure to read these Rules does not excuse noncompliance.

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22. GUIDING PRINCIPLE

These Rules cannot anticipate every circumstance that may arise during a dragon boat race.

When a situation is not expressly addressed, Event officials will apply the following principles:

Safety first. Fair competition. Good sportsmanship. Reasonable judgment.

The Race Director has final authority to determine the appropriate course of action consistent with those principles.

Paddle for Purpose
2027 PoconOS Dragon Boat Race & Festival
Official Race Rules
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