



## Festival Rules and Regulations

### 1.0 Introduction and Team Registration.

Welcome to the Dragon Boat Festival – an experience like none other! As a participant in this unique event, your main goals should be safety and fun.

The Festival Organizer (producer of the race) and Race Manager (manager of race logistics) reserves the right to waive or amend the subject matter addressed in the Festival Rules and Regulations. Anything not addressed in the Rules and Regulations will be determined by the Festival Organizer at its sole discretion.

### 2.0 Conditions of Entry.

- 2.1 **Rules.** All participants must agree to abide by the regulations set forth by the Festival Organizer as a condition of their participation in the event.
- 2.2 **Waiver/Roster.** All team members must sign a waiver form stating they have read the conditions of the waiver, and are aware of the risks associated with dragon boat racing, and accept the risk, waiving any right they may have to any cause of action against any or all sponsors, organizers, charities, volunteers, officials, Festival Organizer and Race Manager for injury to person(s) or loss/damage to personal property. The Team Captain is responsible for ensuring every team member has signed a waiver. You may also be required to turn in a team roster.
- 2.3 **Registration.** Each team member must have submitted a waiver before paddling.
- 2.4 **Double Rostering** If you plan to double roster - paddle on more than one team – it is permitted, but not advised for everyone, because of the strenuous nature of the sport. Please use your own discretion, and know your physical capabilities. Any paddler on multiple rosters should understand when signing the waiver that it presents even greater risk for injury. If you are paddling on more than one team, keep in mind the Festival will not, under any circumstances, delay races to permit a paddler to join another team.

### 3.0 Team and Crew Definitions.



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- 3.1 **Requirements.** Each mixed team must race with a minimum of eight (8) women paddlers. While it is recommended each team race with a full crew of 20 paddlers, a drummer and steerer (provided by Race Management), your team may compete with a minimum of 16 paddlers. You may have three alternates, for a total of 24 on your roster. Your team will receive a time penalty of three (3) seconds for every female your team is short. There is an exception to this rule, however. There is no penalty if the seat is left empty for every female required and not filled. On an adult boat, 15 is the minimum paddling age. For Youth Divisions, paddlers can be ages 12-17. **Note:** For safety reasons, the drummer must weigh 160 pounds or less.
- 3.2 **Female Crews.** All female crews will race against other female crews, if at least three other all-female crews register. All female crews must consist of all women, including the drummer. The provided steerer may be male or female.
- 4.0 **Divisions.** Corporate and community teams will race in Divisions deemed appropriate by race management, and as set forth in the race format. Consult the event website, or the non-profit organization producing the race for more detail.
- 5.0 **Racing Regulations.**
- 5.1 **Equipment.** All dragon boats, paddles, life vests/PFDs, and any necessary ancillary equipment needed for dragon boat racing will be provided by the Festival Organizer. Teams may use their own IDBF-approved paddle and/or U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD. Waist PFDs are allowed. No other use of personal equipment is permitted unless approved by the Festival Organizer and/or Race Manager.
- 5.2 **Equipment Replacement.** All dragon boats, paddles, life vests/PFDs, and any other ancillary equipment used by teams during racing must be returned to the Festival intact. Replacement costs of damaged or missing equipment will be charged to the responsible paddler or team if the Festival Organizer and/or Race Manager determines negligence occurred.
- 5.3 **Sound Devices.** Devices including radios, electronic signaling devices, such as bullhorns, air horns, whistles and other noise making devices are prohibited. Drummers' use provided drumsticks, their voices and/or plastic megaphones to direct team members. Some small sound devices and cox box are



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allowed.

- 5.4 **Wristband.** If required by the Festival Organizer, all paddlers **MUST** wear the wristband provided signifying each team member has signed a waiver for the duration of race day. Participants will not be allowed in the boat without the wristband.
- 5.5 **Race Procedure.** Each race will start as soon as possible following the heat preceding it. The Race Manager and Festival Organizer will do their best to move the race day along in sufficient time. Teams must report to the marshaling area 15-20 minutes prior to their scheduled heat. No race will be held to wait on any team not loaded in the boat on time. Any team that does not report to the marshaling or dock area on time is subject to automatic forfeit of that heat.
- 5.6 **Authority.** The Chief Official will judge, stop the race under any circumstances, caution or disqualify any team or team member at his/her discretion. All rulings by the Chief Official are final.
- 5.7 **Steerers.** Race Management provides all steerers/coaches. Steering is an acquired skill. Any team desiring to use their own steerer must obtain consent from the Festival Organizer and Race Manager.
- 5.8 **Conduct.** Each captain is responsible for the conduct/sportsmanship of his/her team, and complying with race rules. A team is subject to disqualification from competition if any team member purposely exits the dragon boat into the water, or in any way endangers the crew.
- 5.9 **Format.** Teams will follow the format as outlined by race management.

### 6.0 Course Information.

- 6.1 **Lanes.** Racing lanes will be clearly marked with buoys. Steerers are instructed to maneuver the dragon boat in the center of the lane as much as possible to avoid collisions and wake riding.
- 6.2 **Starts.** The start line will be marked with buoys. However, the race starter uses a line of sight to line up boats for a fair start each time.
- 6.3 **Finish.** The finish line will be marked with buoys. However, finish line officials use a digital laser line of sight to determine the actual finish line, used in the computerized finish line software and video equipment. The buoys aren't necessarily the finish line, and are only used as a sightline. Steerers are instructed to call "Let it run", after the front half of the dragon boat has crossed the finish line buoys, or designated sightline mark.



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### 7.0 Safety Procedures.

- 7.1 **Responsibility.** Each team member is responsible for his or her own safety at all times during any activity in or near the dragon boats. Team members, especially the team captain, drummer and provided steerer must know that they have responsibilities regarding the safety of their team. The team captain and steerer will make sure that each team member: 1) Wears a properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD; 2) Is reasonably dressed for the weather, water and race conditions; and 3) Can ideally swim at least 50 meters wearing a PFD in case of capsize or other emergency.
- 7.2 **Distress Signal.** If the team is in distress due to a capsize, medical emergency, or any other unusual occurrence, each team member should listen to the steerer/coach for instruction. In case of medical emergency, each paddler should turn their paddles upside down – blade up – to signal others to the emergency. The steerer should blow his or her whistle for a few seconds three times to alert water safety officials.
- 7.3 **During Distress.** The Steerer will take control of the safety of the boat. The steerer and captain should take note of the number of crew on board before embarking the boat. The team captain and steerer will work together to make sure all paddlers are safe in case of capsize, or other emergency. In the case of capsize, get to the boat and stay with it. Grab your paddle, if you can, and hang on to the boat and listen for instruction from your coach. Make sure you know where your seatmate is, and verify that he/she is safe. If you end up underneath the boat after a capsize, get out as soon as possible. Everyone will count until all are deemed present. Everyone will be instructed to stay with the boat and then handle the emergency as instructed by the steerer/coach. DO NOT swim to shore unless instructed to do so by the coach and/or steerer. If safety personnel approach the dragon boat (most likely U.S. Coast Guard), they may take command, or help coordinate a rescue. When a capsize occurs, the crew can usually get the boat up righted and then use bailers to empty the water before safely embarking again.
- 7.4 **Person Overboard.** In the event someone inside the boat falls overboard, the dragon boat must stop immediately and implement the safety plan by following instructions from the coach/steerer.
- 7.5 **Loss of Steerer or Control of the Boat.** If the steerer falls out of the boat, loses control, or if your boat is in danger of hitting another dragon boat, the



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drummer should instruct the team to “Let it run” and then immediately follow with “Hold the Boat.” Other commands like “stabilize”, aka “flare” (paddle blades flat on top of the water) and asking the crew to paddle backward may also be required under these circumstances. It is important that the drummer understands race commands, not panic, and that each paddler stays against the gunwale (side of the boat).

- 7.6 **Injury.** Any injuries sustained as a result of participating in practice or on race day should be reported immediately to the Dock or Marshaling personnel and/or Chief Official.
- 7.7 **Position.** All paddlers must remain seated for the duration of the race. Kneeling or standing is prohibited. If your paddle breaks or falls, let it go. For your own safety, do not attempt to save it.
- 7.8 **Weather.** In the event of lightning or any other severe weather emergency, the Festival Organizer may cancel the event with no rain date or refund of entry fees. Races may continue in the rain.

### 8.0 Festival Rules.

- 8.1 **Lost or Stolen Items.** The Festival Organizer, staff and volunteers will not be held responsible for lost or stolen articles left at the site.
- 8.2 **Medical Personnel.** Emergency medical personnel will be on site, but teams are also encouraged to bring a First Aid kit as well.
- 8.3 **Chief Official.** Should teams need to consult the Chief Official for any questions or discrepancies on race day, the team captain **only** should discuss the matter with the Chief Official by asking the Chief Marshaler to summon the Chief Official. Teams must address race discrepancies to the Chief Official within 15 minutes of the end of the race heat.

### 9.0 Starts

- 9.1 **Process.** Each boat will be called up to the start line buoys for alignment.
- 9.2 **Alignment.** The race starter will use certain commands until each boat’s dragon head is aligned evenly.  
Commands might include: “Boat (number) X, one stroke forward.” Or, “Boat number X, back 2 strokes. You will often hear: “Boat (number) X, hold your boat.”



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Example: “Hold” means to keep the boat stationary, or keep it from drifting. To achieve this, paddlers will place the entire paddle blade perpendicular in the water, and hold it there to stop the current from moving the boat. This will help ensure crews have the best start possible.

- 9.3 **Commands.** Once alignment has been established, the start commands on race day will be: “We have alignment.” “Are you ready?” And then, “Attention Please.” Next, you will hear the air horn.

At the start command of “Are you Ready?” if your team is not ready, the drummer is instructed to raise his/her hand to notify the race starter. (The drummer should keep his/her hand down otherwise, until the horn blows). Examples of a reason to raise the hand: your boat is wedged in a buoy; the bow of your boat is turned; or a medical emergency. The steerer and drummer should communicate, with the steerer giving the drummer direction. The race starter will let you know to make the necessary adjustment. The starter will then start over with the “Are you Ready?” command. If a crew starts after the words “Attention Please” and before the horn, it has made a False Start, or if weather or some other circumstance causes one boat to suddenly advance beyond the other boats, a false start has occurred. The Aligner shall indicate a False Start by saying, “Hold your Boats” through the speaker system, or blow the air horn twice to stop the boats and ask them to return to the start line.

### 10.0 Penalties.

The Festival Organizer may impose penalties for the following reasons:

- i. Violation of safety procedures.
- ii. Infraction of written and stated rules and regulations.
- iii. Unsportsmanlike conduct. (Any paddler – in the opinion of the Chief Official – acting inappropriately or unprofessionally in the context of the competition).
- iv. Violating any venue rules, including being in possession of and/or under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs on-site.
- v. Ignoring requests or instructions from the Festival Organizer.
- vi. Willful damage to or loss of any Festival-owned equipment.
- vii. The Chief Official will determine if loss of control by a steerer during a race



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- should prompt a penalty, based on the circumstances of the incident.
- viii. Misrepresentation of the Festival or charity associated with it.

Penalties may include:

- i. Ban from any official standing and/or awards.
- ii. Disqualification of team members or a team from further or future participation in the races.
- iii. Requirement for financial reimbursement for damaged or lost equipment.
- iv. At the Chief Officials discretion, a time penalty.

Team captains, or designee are required to attend the mandatory team captain meeting. Otherwise, all information will be shared with team captains by e-mail.

### Festival Rules Contact Info:

Race Management: Dynamic Dragon Boat Racing LLC  
Contact: Penny Sanburn  
Phone: 865.742.4306  
E-mail: [penny@racedragonboats.com](mailto:penny@racedragonboats.com)

### Info/Tips for New Teams

**Conduct in the Boat:** There should be minimal talking once your team is in the boat. The drummer and steersperson must be able to communicate with the team and each other at all times, and all team members need to be able to hear the commands. Paddles straight up in the air, blades up, if you need to draw attention to yourselves in case of emergency.

**Buddy System:** Make certain that each of your team members knows who is sitting beside them in case the boat swamps/capsizes, which is not a common occurrence. Teammates will be responsible for each other's safety until rescue arrives. **STAY WITH THE BOAT!**

**Life Jackets:** Everyone must wear a life jacket during practice and on Race Day.



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**Drummer:** The drummer should attend practice, if possible. He or she will assist in setting the timing for the team and can be an excellent source of motivation and inspiration during practices and on Race Day.

### How To Sit In The Boat

Outside hip forward

Inside hip back

Outside leg extended along the gunwale (inside top rail of the boat)

Inside foot braced effectively and comfortably

### Seven Steps of the Dragon Boat Paddling Technique

Rotation.

Reach Extension.

Top Arm Drive (stab the water).

Catch -powerfully drive the paddle into the water at approximately a 45-degree angle, burying the entire blade into the water - your hand should get wet.

Pull water with the entire blade until you get to just behind your knee.

Exit - get the paddle straight up and out of the water quickly, no further back than your hip.

Recovery - snap the paddle back into the paddles up position for the next catch

### Dragon Boat Paddling Commands

- **Paddles Up:** Be ready to paddle. All paddlers with paddles above the water (3-6 inches from the surface) ready to enter the water.
- **Take it Away:** Begin paddling.
- **Let it Run:** Stop paddling and let the boat glide.
- **Hold the Boat or Stop the Boat:** Place paddles in the water, with paddle pointed straight down, blade submerged. It will bring the boat to a stop. If you hear the command, "Hold hard," quickly put your paddle straight down and then back it up one stroke. Some coaches may say "check it, or check the boat."





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- **Back it Down:** Paddle backwards.
- **Draw (left or right side):** Initiates a turn using draw strokes by the designated paddlers. Can also be used to get the boat closer to something, a dock, for example.
- **Brace, or Stabilize the boat:** Place your paddle blade on top of the water and hold it there. This stabilizes the boat. It is needed when anyone stands up in the boat to change position, etc. Some coaches may say “flare your paddles.”

Note: Your coach/steerer will brief you about these commands before your practice. In the boat, when the coach is talking, please continue to paddle and listen. Never stop paddling unless your coach says, “Let it run.”