



Umpiring

***This presentation reflects the World Rowing Statutes, Rules of Racing and interpretation of them in effect on Jan 1, 2026.
World Rowing is not responsible for providing updates to this material.***

- Introduction.
- Duties of the Umpire
- Washes and Umpire Rotation
- The starting of the race
- The position of the umpire's launch.
- Obstacles.
- Unfair weather conditions.
- Incidents.
- Objections, protests, outcome of protests and appeals
- Re-Rows

- The primary principles guiding the Organizing Committee and the regatta officials are:
 - Safety of all rowers
 - Fairness for all rowers
- As the regatta official responsible for the race, the Umpire has a big role in meeting these principles

- Duties of the Umpire
 - Ensure the proper conduct of the race
 - Ensure the safety of the rowers
 - Endeavor to ensure that
 - No crew gains any advantage, or
 - No crew suffers a disadvantage
- } From its opponents
or outside
interference

Umpiring

Introduction

- Where the umpire is satisfied that a crew has been *significantly* impeded, the Umpire shall endeavor to restore the crews chance of winning by:
 - Imposing appropriate sanctions on crews at fault
 - The Umpire may *but does not need to* alert the crews first
 - The Umpire will not give steering instructions but will work
 - to ensure that accidents are avoided
 - Prevent crews from being impeded

- Actions an Umpire may take:
 - Stop the race and order a re-row from the start
 - Allow the race to continue and exclude crews after race is finished
 - Order a re-row for such crews as he designates
 - Take no action
 - If the Umpire feels that the outcome of the race was not affected, the Umpire may decline a re-row

- The attitude of the umpire.
- The rights and the duties of the crews.
- Equipment.

Introduction

The attitude of the umpire

- Project a calm Presence
- Neutral and fair
- In favour of the athletes
- “Knowledge” of the crews
- Alert
- Anticipate!
- Always ready to (re)act quickly and correctly
- To foresee is better than to heal!
- Quiet but respected “boss” of the race!

Introduction

Responsibility of the Crews

- Each crew has a lane reserved for its own use, as allocated to it by the Starter.
- A crew remaining completely in their allocated lane (including its oars or sculls) is “protected”.
- A crew may leave its lane, if:
 - no other crew is obstructed
 - no advantage is taken by that move
- Each crew has to follow the instructions of the umpire.
- If a crew considers it has not had a fair chance to race, it always can “object”.

Introduction

Launch and Equipment

- During the official hours of racing (when the traffic rules for racing apply), the President of the Jury approves
 - What boats can go on the regatta course in racing and training areas
 - The movement of all approved boats.
- The Umpire is given the responsibility for the movement and position of the Umpire's boat.

Introduction

Launch and Equipment

- Umpires launch:
 - Control of the launch → communication with driver.
 - Control of the fuel level...
 - Test of the “capability” of the boat.
 - Spare paddle.
- White flag and red flag
 - Within reach but out of sight (unless in use)
- Loud hailer/Megaphone
- Bell
- Schedule

Launch Washes

Rowers like flat water without any wash!!!

In racing, warm-up, cool down and practice



Umpires should minimize washes whenever possible

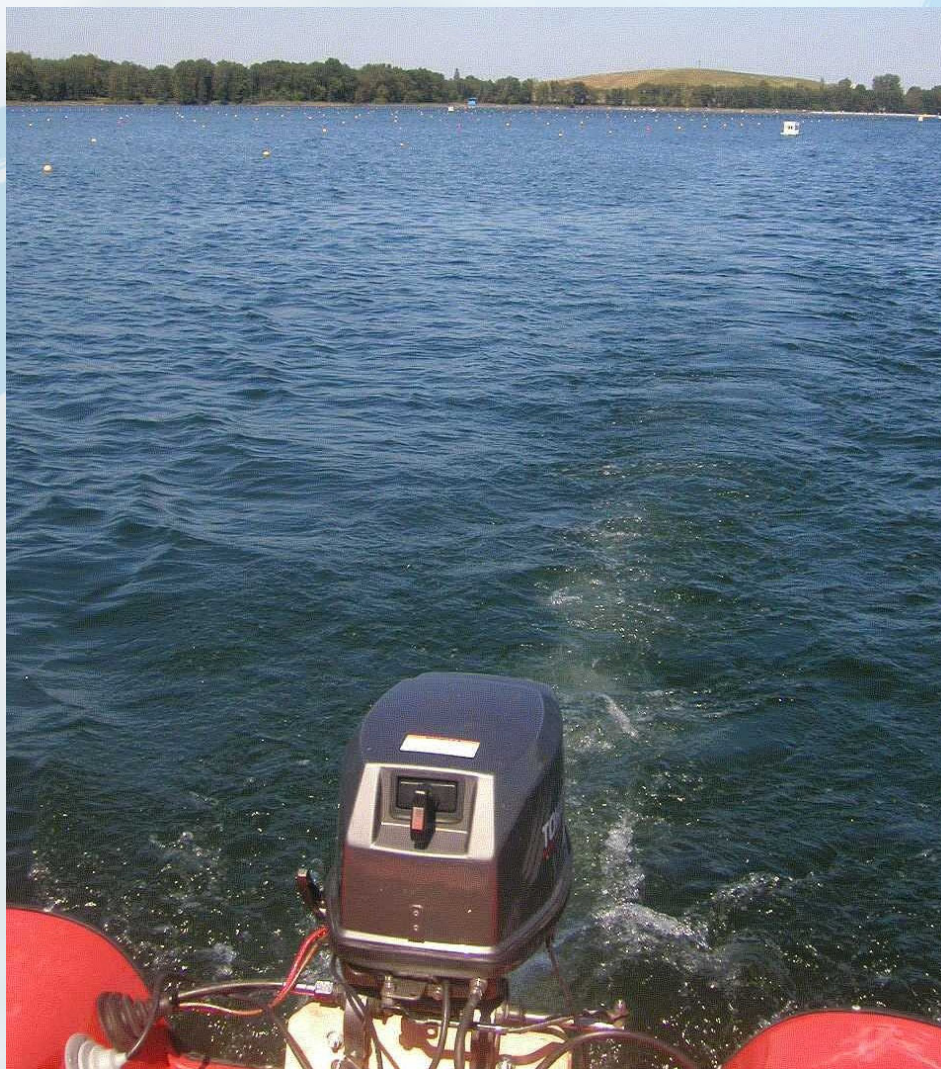
2 Types of Washes



Types of Washes



Washes - even at very slow speed



Even crews are making washes!



ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS

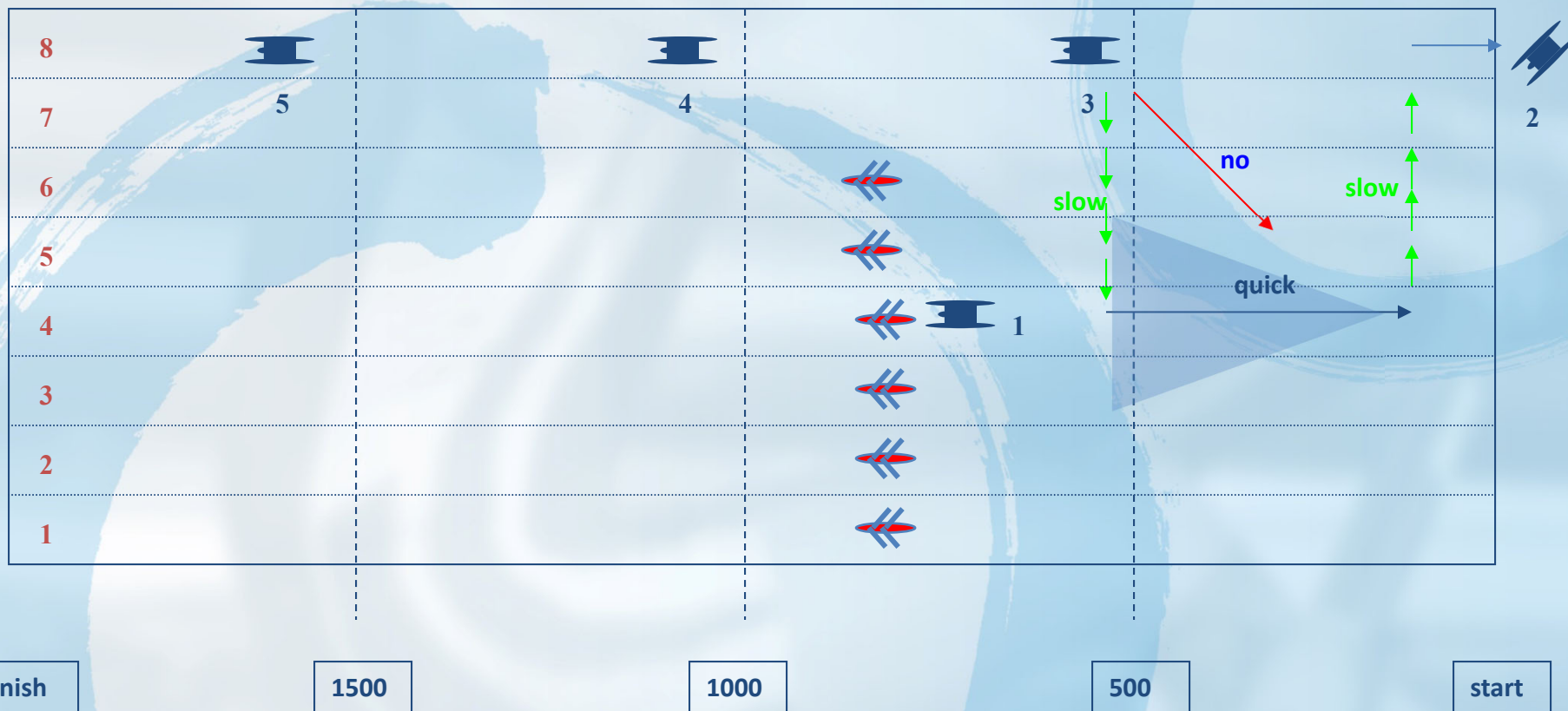
Dynamic (1)



Normal rotation - If there is enough time between races then the Umpire can move slowly up the side of the course to minimize any wash.

ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS

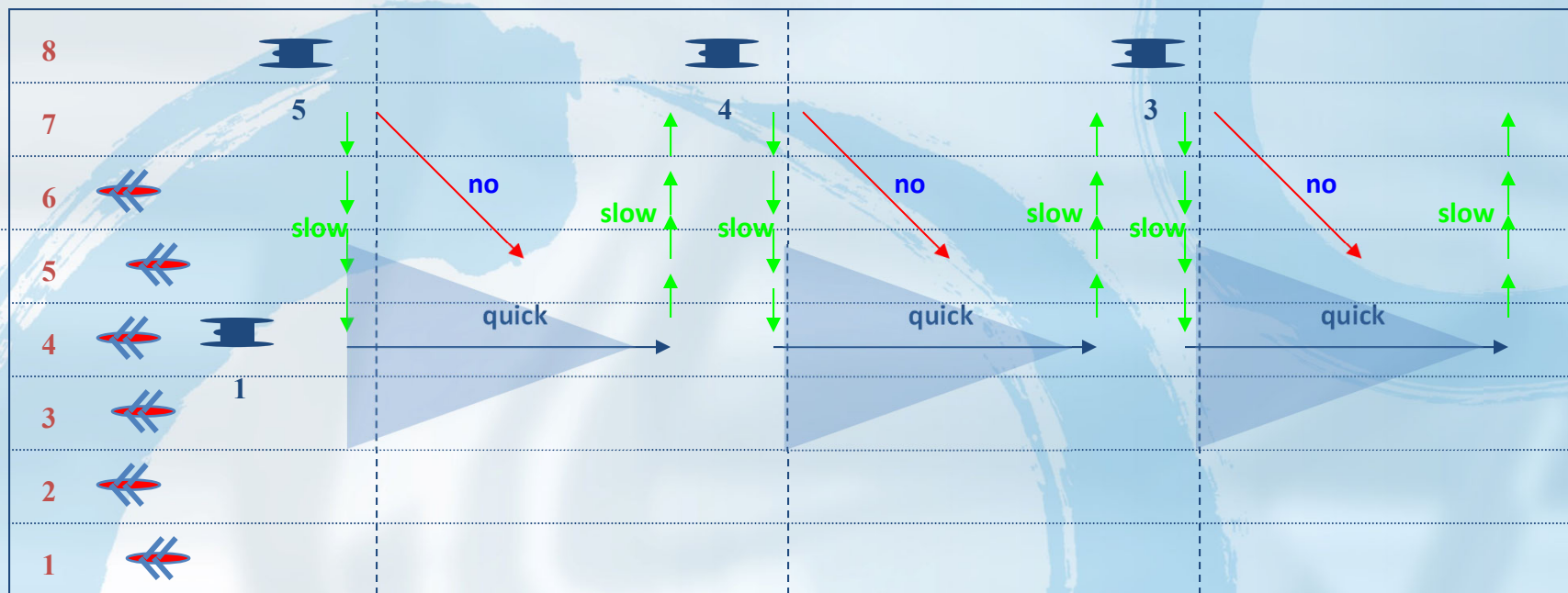
Dynamic (2)



Rotation if there not enough time between races to move slowly up the side of the course

ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS

Dynamic (3)



finish

1500

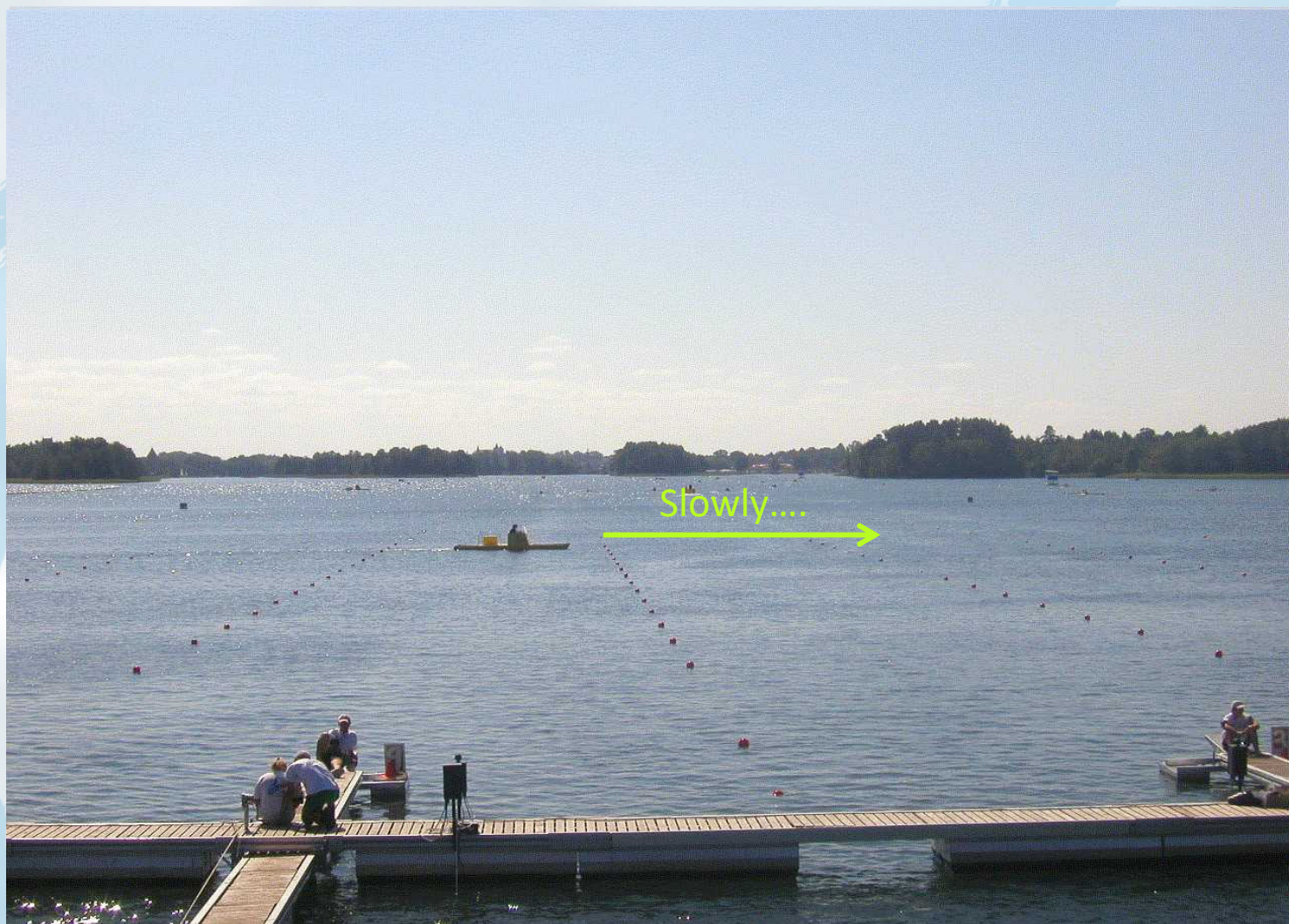
1000

500

start

ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS

Dynamic (4)



Zonal Umpiring

- Who can determine when to use Zonal Umpiring
 - Organising committee
 - Executive Committee for a World Rowing Championship, Olympic & Paralympic, Youth Olympic or QOR or World Rowing Cup regatta
- Zonal Umpiring
 - Umpires are positioned in boats on water and are responsible for a zone or section of the race course
 - Umpires may move onto the course to observe and issue instructions and take actions according to the Rules
 - Umpires need to record observations of each race

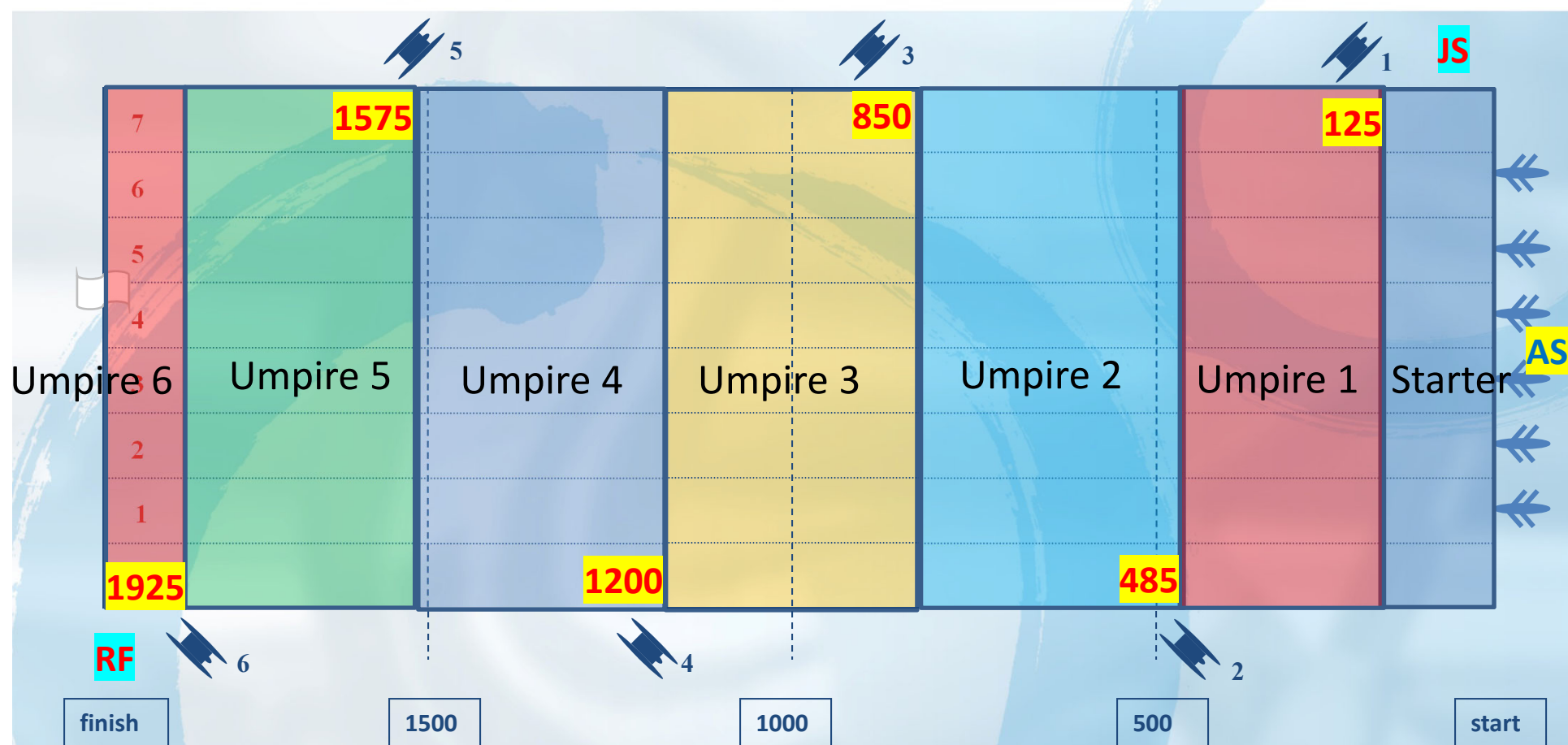
Zonal Umpiring

- Once the decision has been made to use Zonal Umpiring, the President of the Jury will determine how it is implemented
 - Factors to be considered include
 - Physical characteristics of the venue including warm-up/cool down areas
 - Weather
 - Race Schedule
 - Media coverage
 - The President of the Jury and OC may propose alternatives to accomplish the same goals
 - Where the President of the Jury considers that weather or other conditions are such that zonal umpiring is about to put the safety of crews at risk, the President may decide to revert to dynamic umpiring for the remainder of that racing session.

Zonal Umpiring

- COMMUNICATION
 - Short messages (you all are on the same channel!).
 - Always communicate by mentioning the name of the crew (and in some cases the event) and the location (distance).
 - **Not (only) by number** (Lane? Bow?).
 - Only if something is or could become “suspicious” or creates or could create a concern”.
 - The one receiving repeats shortly the message.

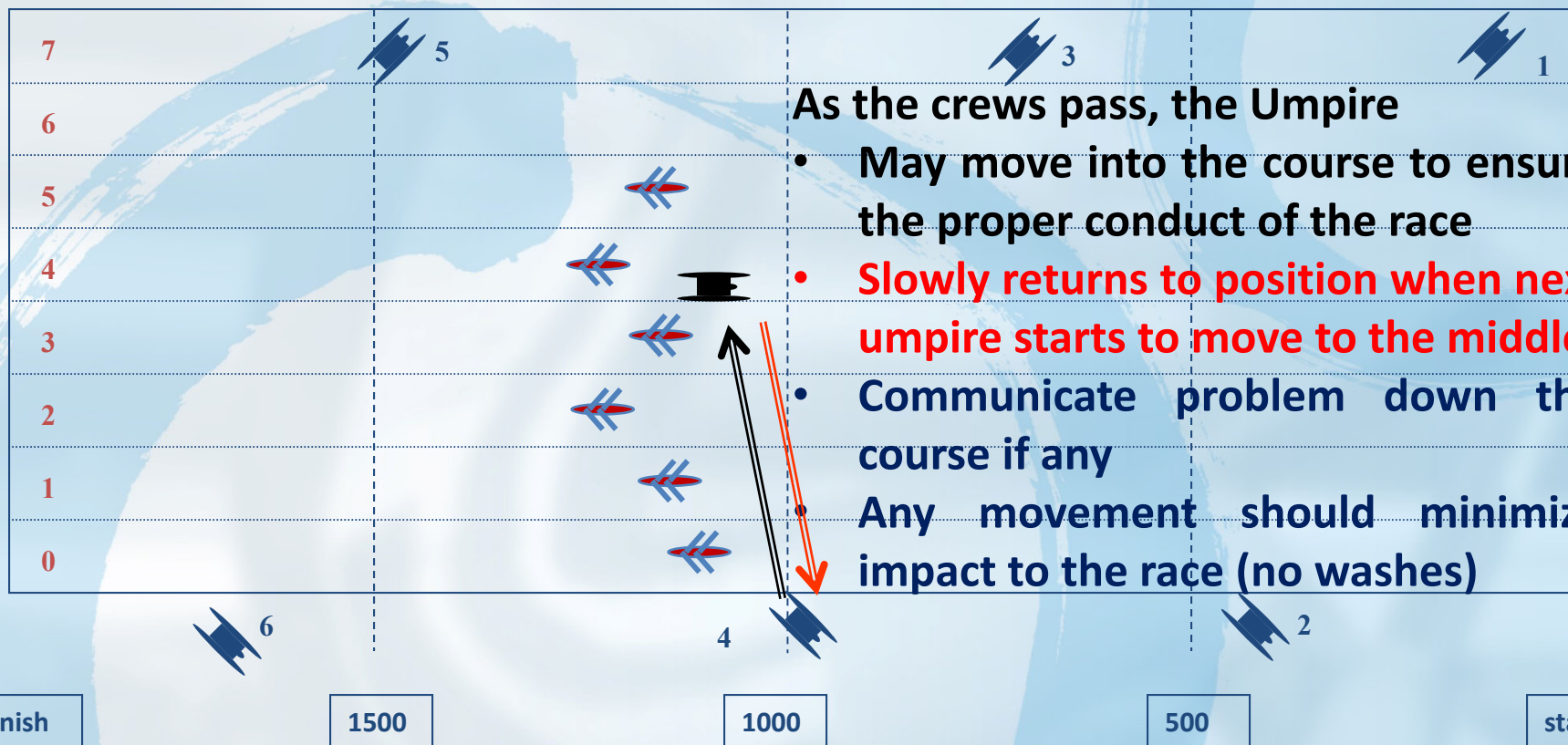
ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS zONAL UMPIRING EXAMPLE (1)



Each Umpire has a zone of responsibility and should be positioned at the beginning of the Zone

Where possible, Umpires should be on alternating sides of the course

ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS ZONAL UMPIRING EXAMPLE (1)

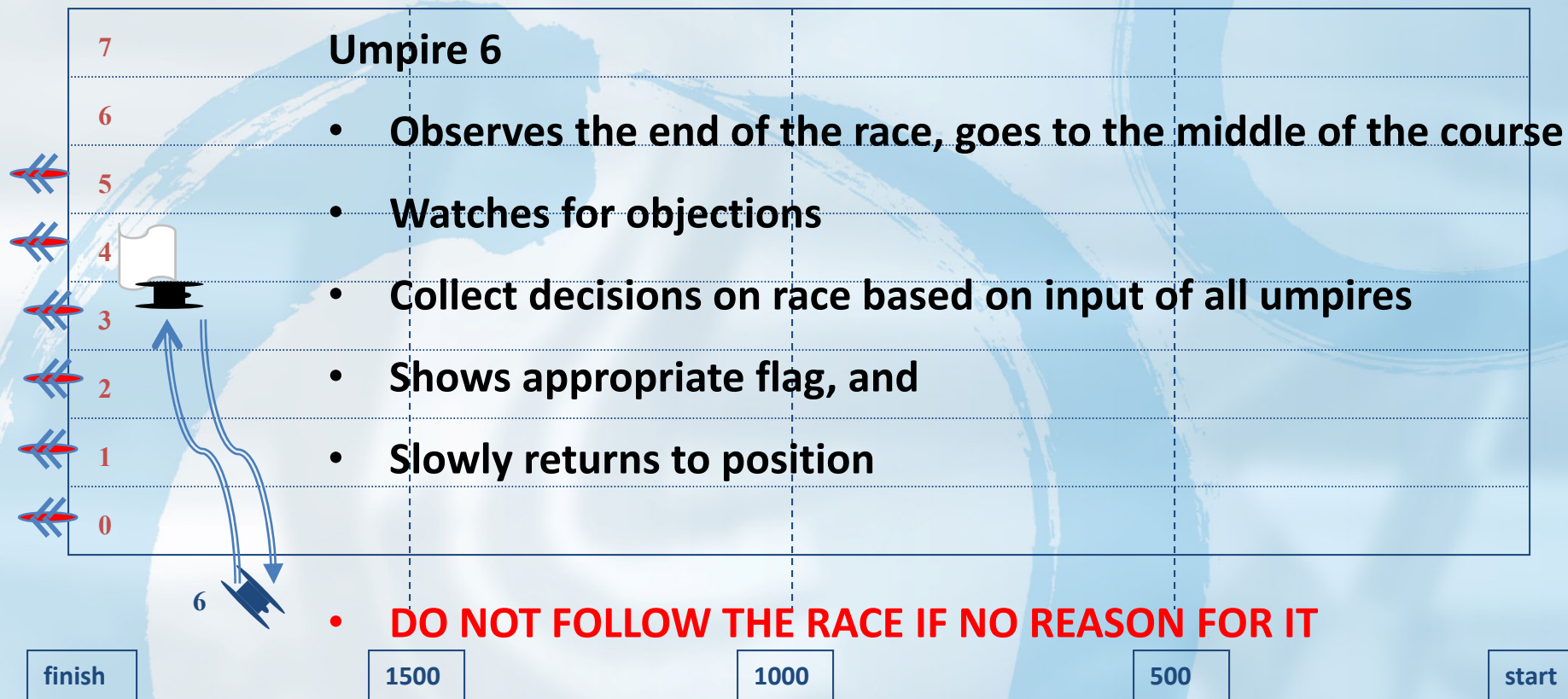


Zonal Umpiring

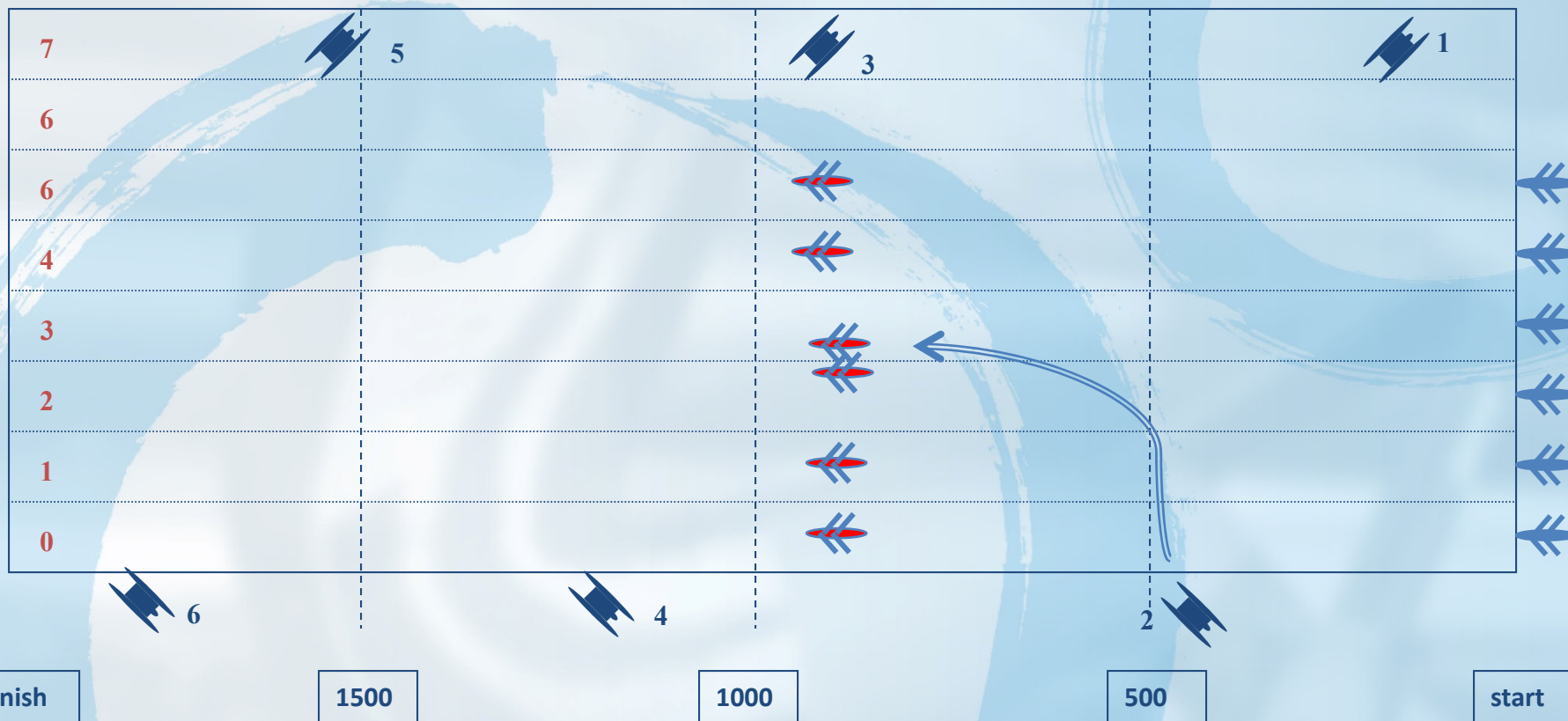
In Zonal the Umpire can move to observe the race
but minimize washes



ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS ZONAL UMPIRING EXAMPLE (1)

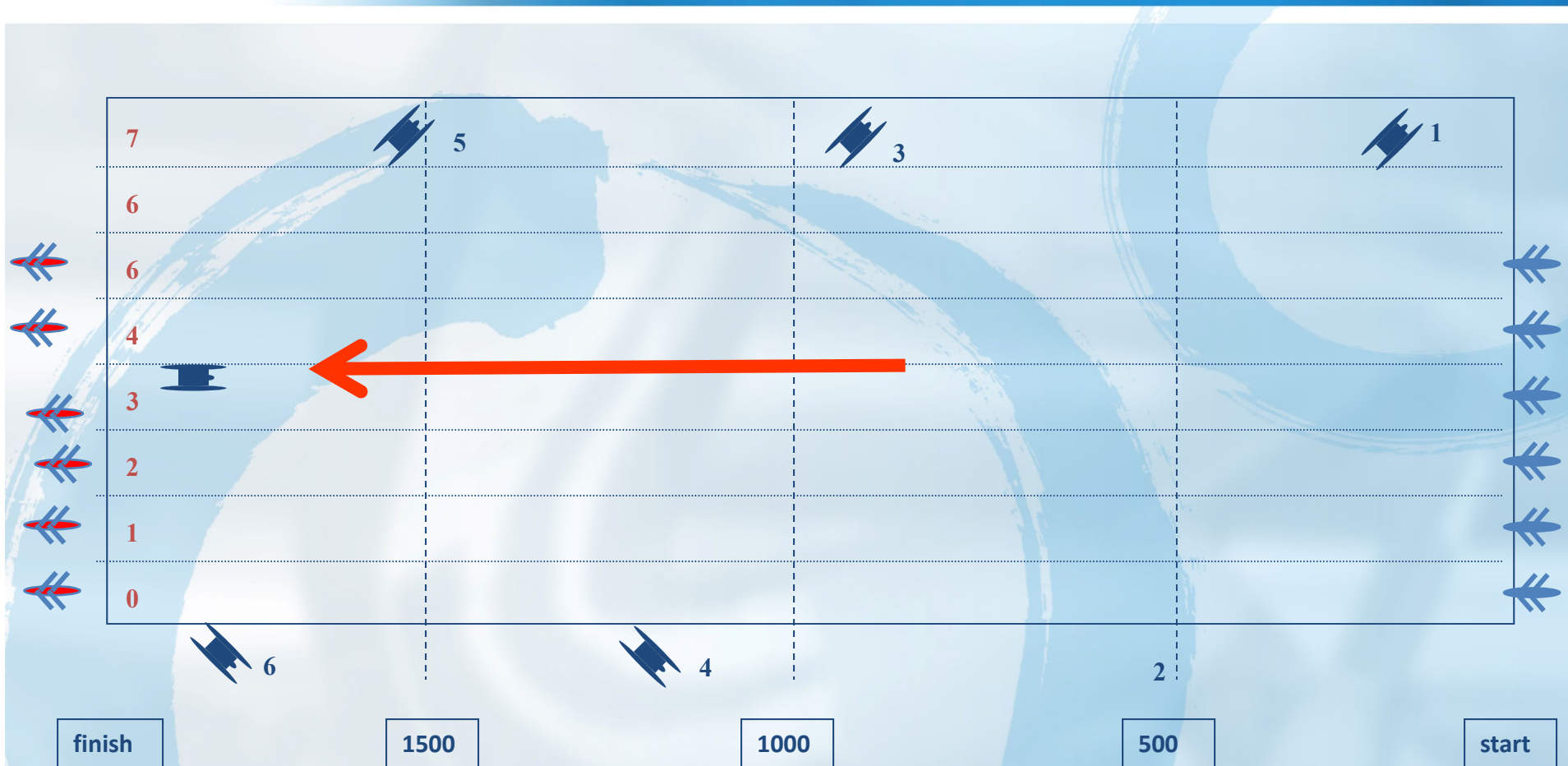


ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS zONAL UMPIRING EXAMPLE (1)



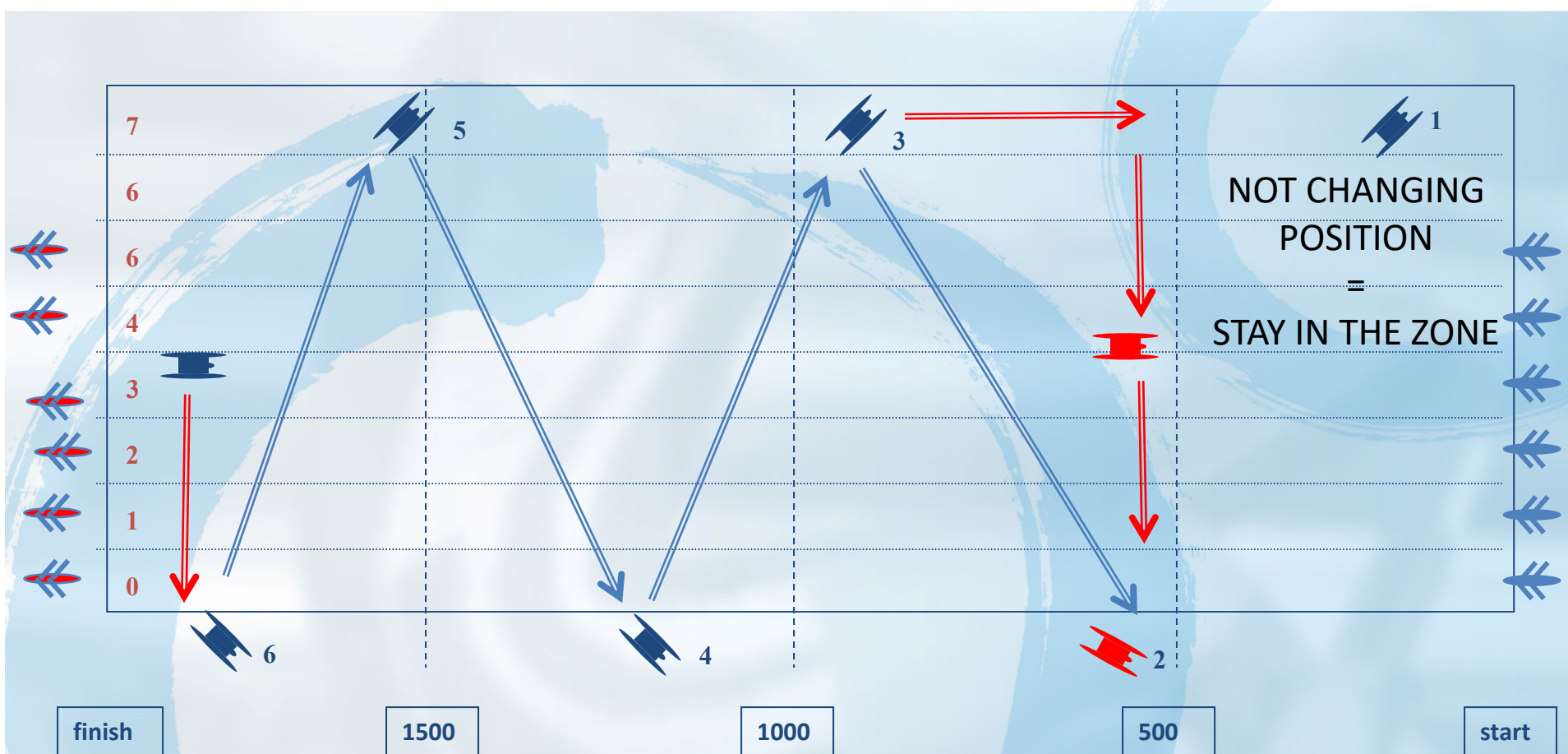
**If there is a problem
an umpire can stop a race or join in and follow the race to the finish**

ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS ZONAL UMPIRING EXAMPLE (1)



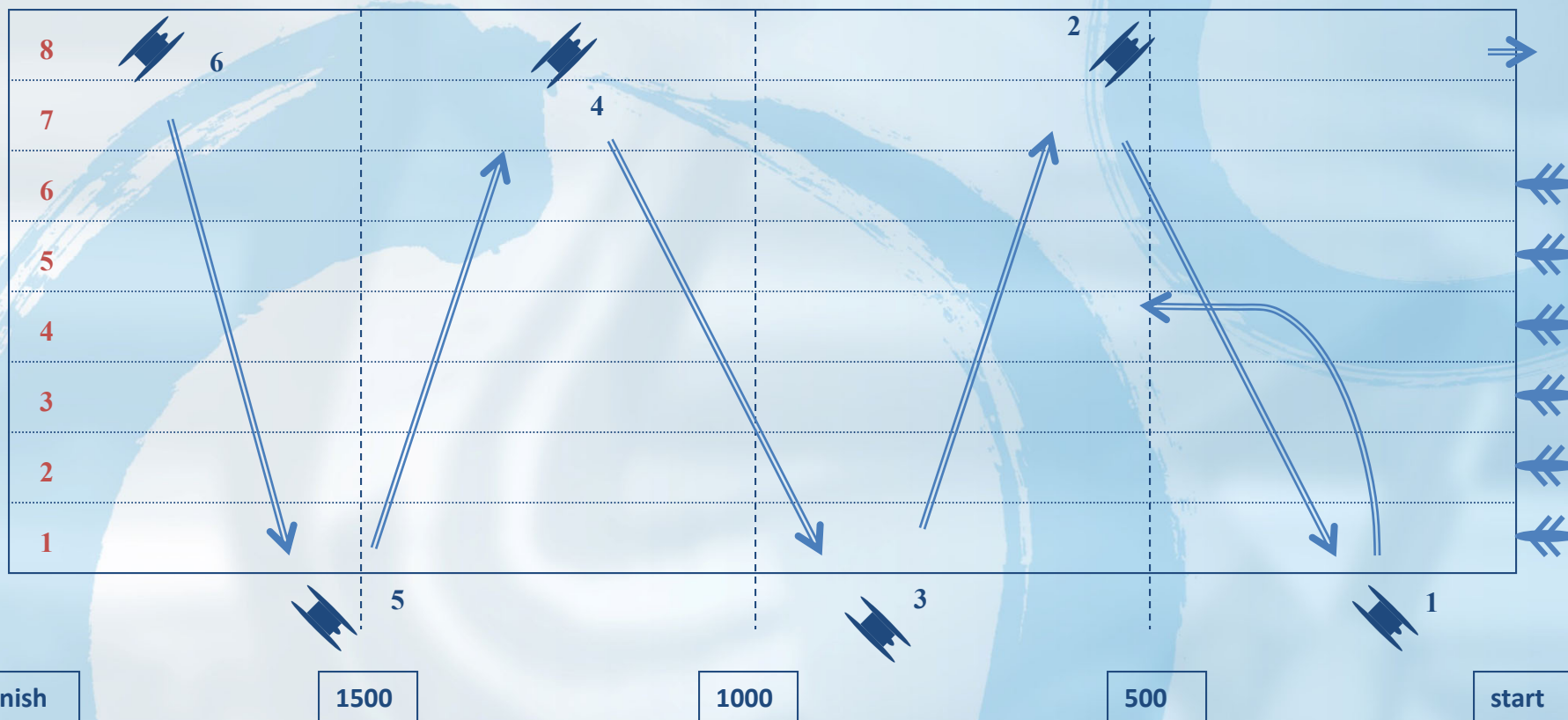
- The umpire, who followed the race will become U6

ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS ZONAL UMPIRING EXAMPLE (1)



- All other umpires, who were closer to the finish than the 'moving' umpire, will move 1 position towards the start

ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS ZONAL UMPIRING EXAMPLE (1)



- Periodically umpires may be asked to change positions, or
- May need to move when an umpire joins in to follow a race

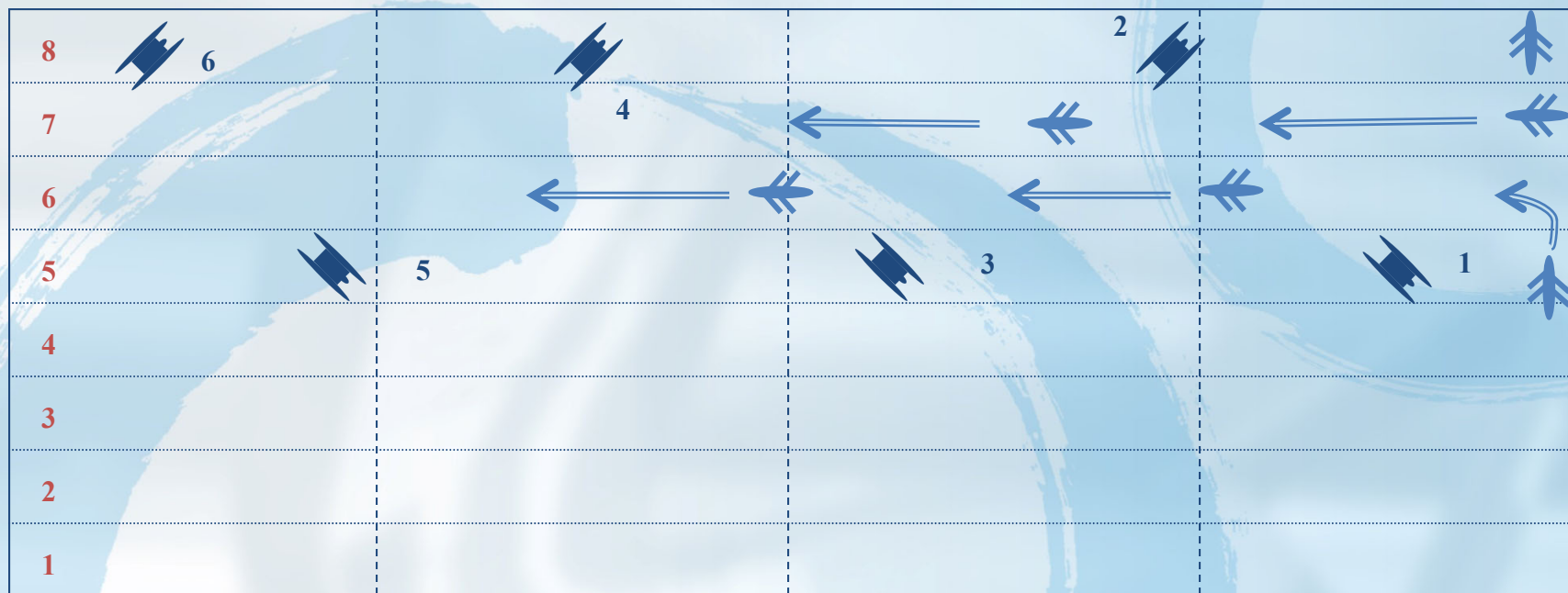
Para-Rowing

Special Cases

- Each race is followed by **one Umpire along the entire length of the race (2,000m)**
- Normal rotation of Umpires
- PR3 (former LTA) Rowers can be blind so verbal command should accompany flags (e.g. “White Flag” or “Red Flag” at the end of the race).
- A rower’s hands may be strapped to the oar and can not be raised to object so rower will get Umpire’s attention by saying “Objection”

ROTATION of the UMPIRE BOATS

Time Trials



finish

1500

1000

500

start

- A time trial may use 1 or 2 lanes
- The Umpires are stationed along the course
- The Umpires observe the crews and take any appropriate actions
- Do not block distance markers for athletes or media

Umpire Positioning

- During long race sessions, the President of the Jury may decide to have the Umpires change jobs during racing
- It is important to know
 - When a change will be made
 - Where the change will be made
 - Follow the President of the Jury's instructions
- Do not forget about the athletes or races during a change

If the Umpire needs to communicate to the crew:

1. Call the nation
2. Order or sanction
 - Visual indicator (e.g. white or red flag)
 - Verbal instruction (e.g. “OBSTACLE”, “STOP”)
 - Audible indication (e.g. bell)

Communications to the Crews



The Umpire must be in the correct position to communicate to a crew!

Communications to the Crews



Umpiring

On the way to the start

- Safety of the crews
 - Monitor the movements of crews → are they following the traffic pattern
- Check the capabilities of your launch
- Monitor the course equipment and installations
- Monitor the course: obstacles!
- Follow the plan for the “rotation” of the launches.
- Be ready to take over at any moment another umpire’s race.
- Communicate the Umpire’s observations to the colleagues in the jury.

Umpiring

On the way to the start



Umpires at work - checking the course.....

Umpiring

On the way to the start



Always be attentive and ready to take over if needed!

Umpiring

During the start procedure

- Launch in the center or near to the Judge at the Start (in principle)
- Observation of the crews
 - (f.e. in the case of technical problems)

- Precedence:

Except for the duties specifically assigned to them, both the Starter and the Judge at the Start are subordinate to the Umpire.

Position Umpire during Start



The Umpire should be able to

- to observe all crews
- to quickly get behind the crews



Umpiring In the Start zone

- As soon as the race has started the Umpire's launch shall **IMMEDIATELY** follow the competitors in the middle of the course.



Umpiring In the Start zone



Umpiring In the Start zone



Umpiring In the Start zone

Good positions!!



Do not block the Judge at
Start view of the Start Line

Start

Umpire is slow in starting and “looses” the opportunity to be in a good position



Start

Umpire anticipates and gets right behind the crews



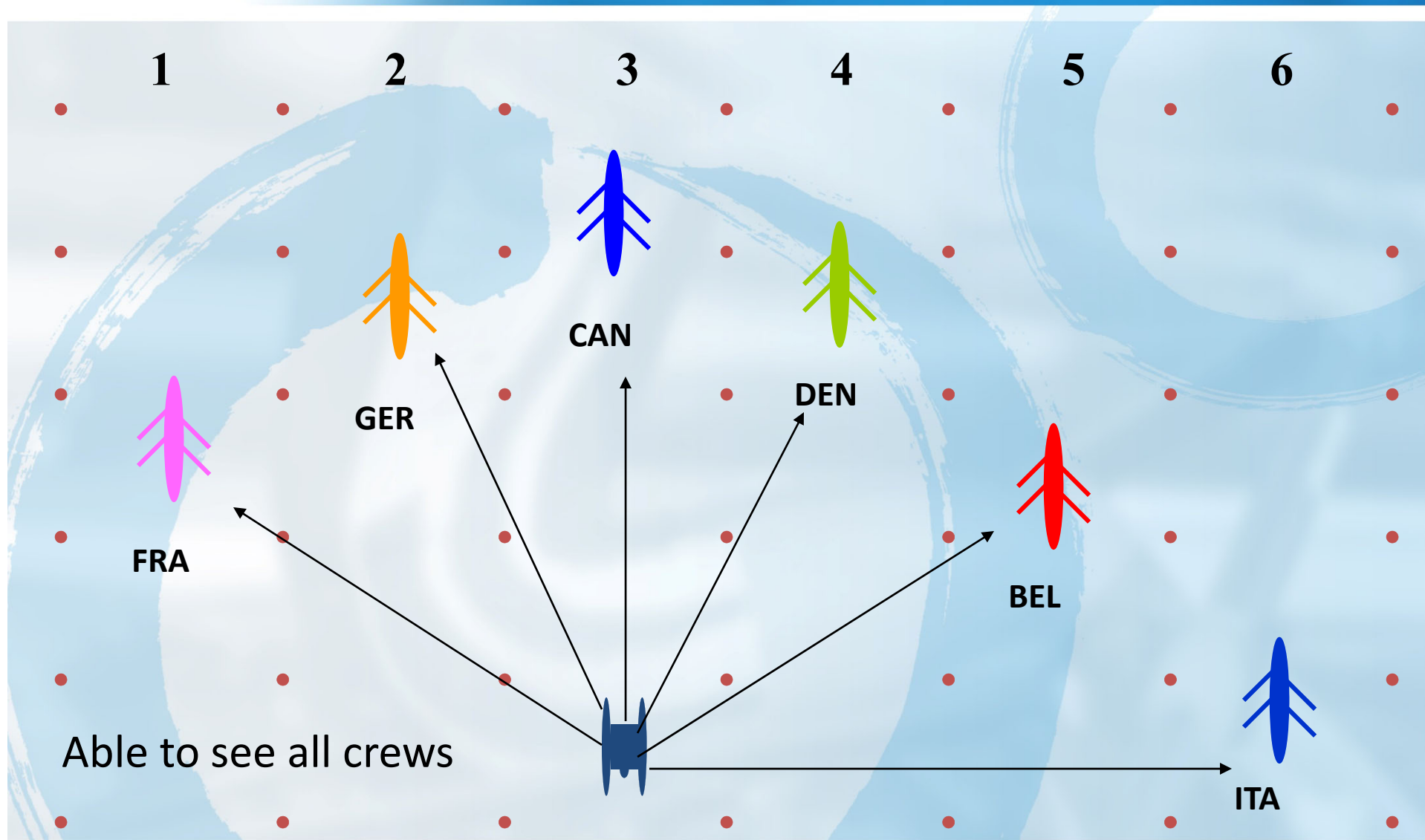
- In general.
- Weather conditions.
- Type of event.
- Which round of the event(heat, repechage, final).
- The distance covered.
- Experience of the participating crews.

Position of the Umpire's Launch

In general

- Direct view on all crews.
- No position in between two crews.
- Pay attention to washes.
- Be ready to act if necessary (but not too early).

Position of the Umpire's Launch In general



Position of the Umpire's Launch



Good Position

- Out quickly
- In the middle
- Near buoy line
- Not directly behind a crew





Position of the Umpire's Launch

Weather conditions

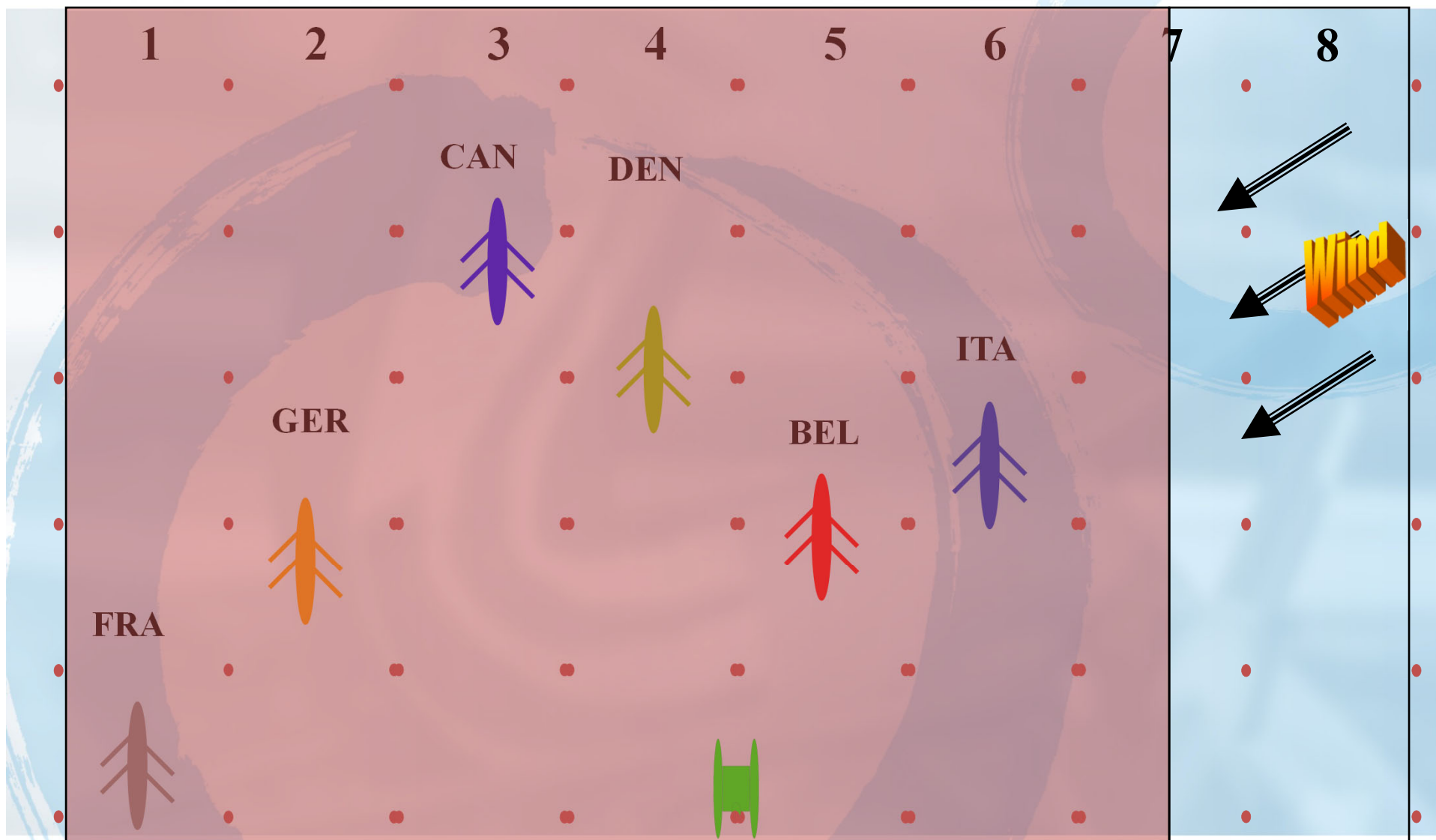
- Sun and wind.
- Unequal conditions.
 - But equal on 6 lanes.
 - Equal on less than 6 lanes.

Weather Conditions

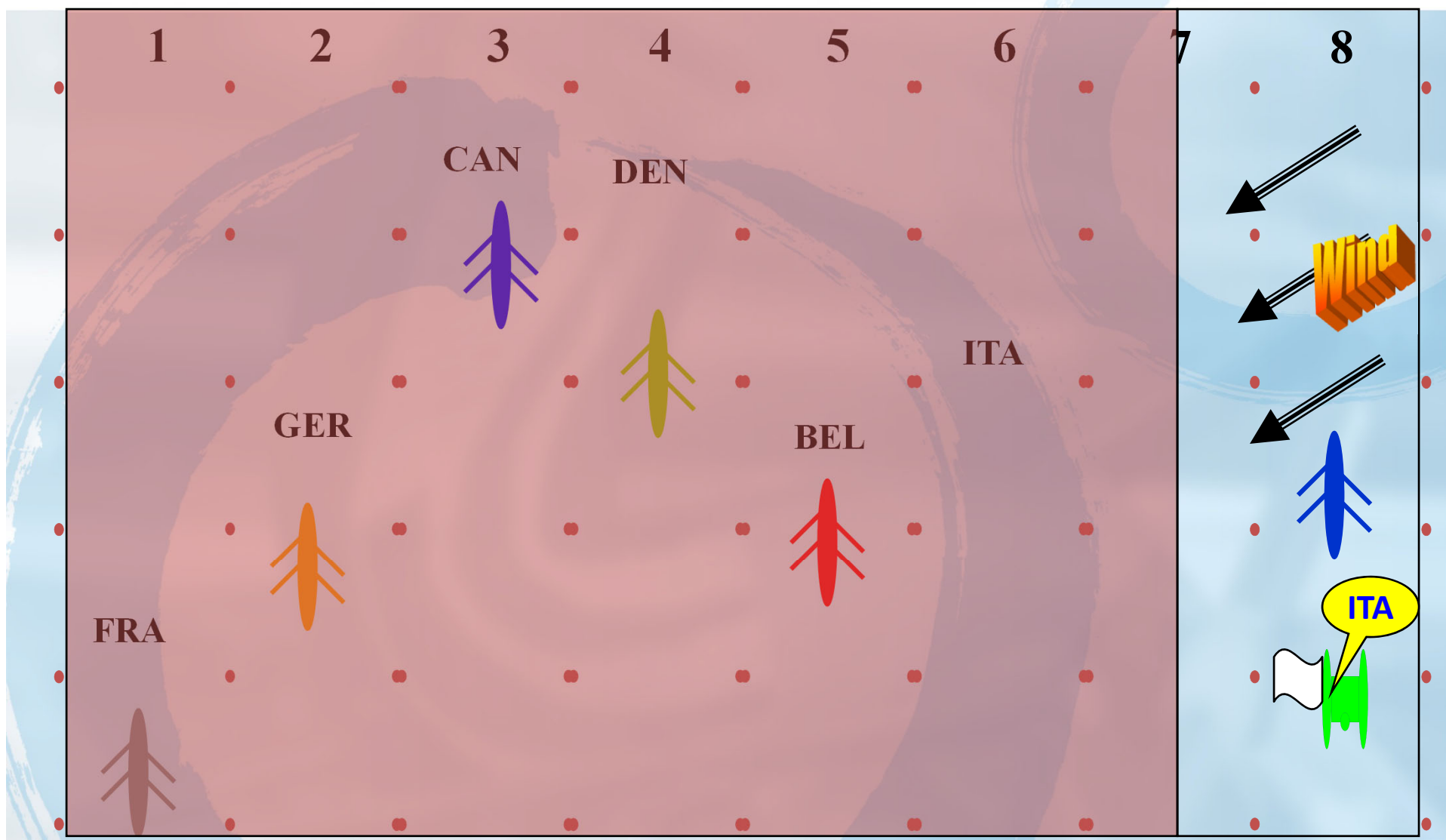
Sun and wind

- The position of the sun, but even more the wind conditions may have an important influence on the position of the Umpire's launch.
- Example: a head wind will oblige the Umpire to come closer to the crews.

Unequal weather conditions (1)



Unequal weather conditions (2)



Position of Umpire's Launch

Type of event

- The speed of the different boat types can have an influence on the way to guide the Umpire's launch.
- The presence of a coxswain can also influence the decision how to position the Umpire's launch.
- Example: an PR1 (former AS1x) is relatively “easy” to Umpire compared to a 2-.

Position of Umpire's Launch

Type of heat

- Number of crews to qualify
Knowledge of the progression system!
- Pay Attention!
Crews are advanced on the basis of time
Even a battle between the 4th and 5th of a
Final B at a pre-Olympic World Rowing
Championship may be very important
considering the Olympic qualification!

Position of Umpire's Launch Progressions

Entries	Heats	Progression	Quarterfinal	Semifinal	Final
1-6	1	6			A
7-12	2	2 from each H + 2 FT			A B *
13-18	3	2 from each H to SF + 6 FT		2	A B C *
19-24	4	2 from each H to SF + 4 FT		2	A B C D *
25-30	5	2 from each H to QF + 14 FT	4	2	A B C D E *
31-36	6	2 from each H to QF + 12 FT	4	2	A B C D E F *
37-42	7	2 from each H to QF + 10 FT	4	2	A B C D E F G *
43-48	8	2 from each H to CF + 8 FT	4	2	A B C D E F G H *
49-54	9	2 from each H to CF + 6 FT	4	2	A B C D E F G H I *
55-60	10	2 from each H to CF + 4 FT	4	2	A B C D E F G H I J *
61-66	11	2 from each H to CF + 2 FT	4	2	A B C D E F G H I J K *

Position of Umpire's Launch Progressions

- **What does this mean for Umpires:**
 - All crews need to be “protected” → even the last crews in a heat may be able to advance on times;
 - Where there is interference in a heat
 - For an objection an umpire may need to consider not only the crews in the current race but all of the crews at the same level of round of the event
 - When requiring a re-row:
 - the re-row may be to determine if a crew would have advanced on time;
 - Therefore, the re-row may involve crews from different heats

Challenges:

What if a collision in H1 ?

Waiting for decision umpire till the result of H5 ?

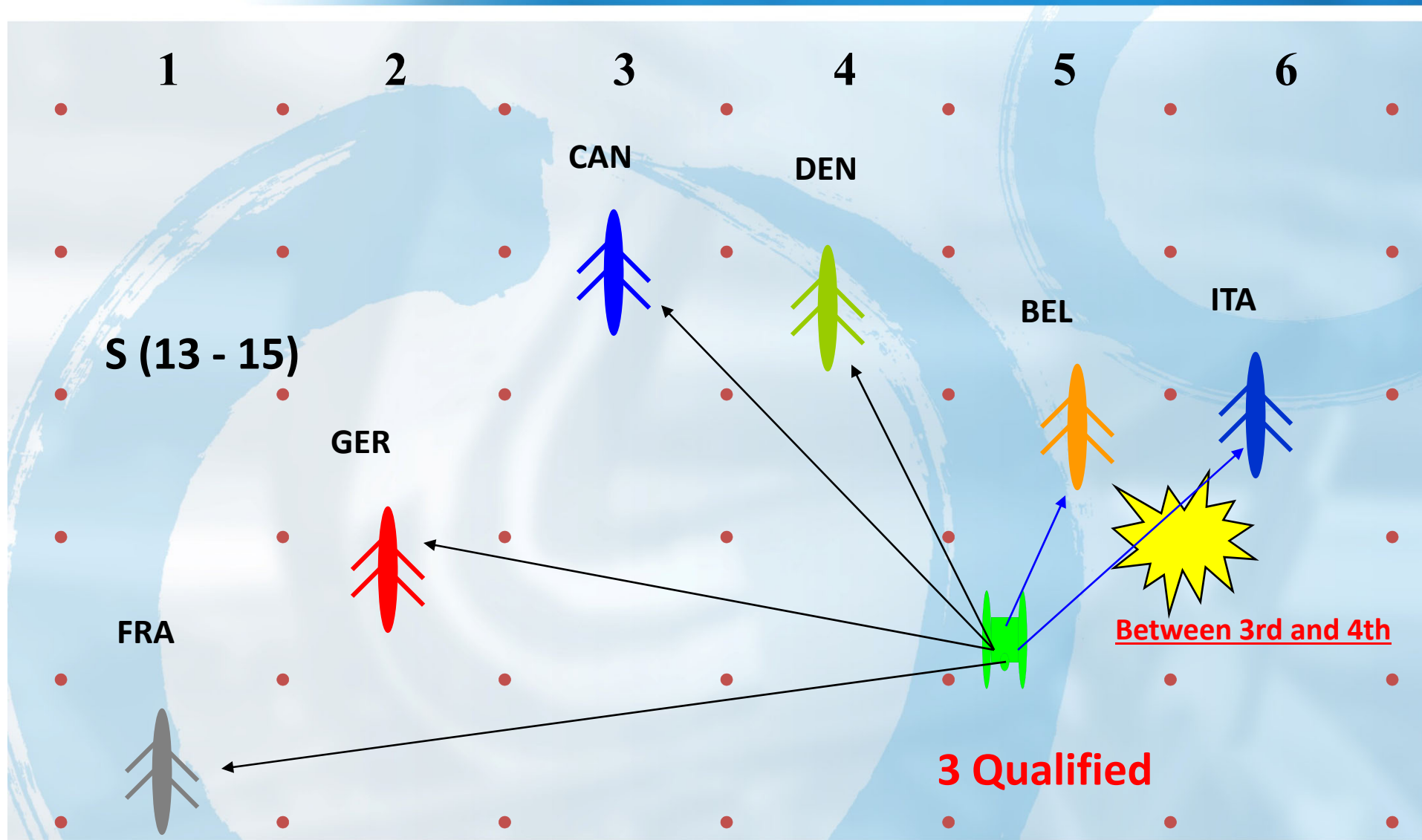
What if a rerow after collision?

2hrs in between – comparison of times ? Weather?

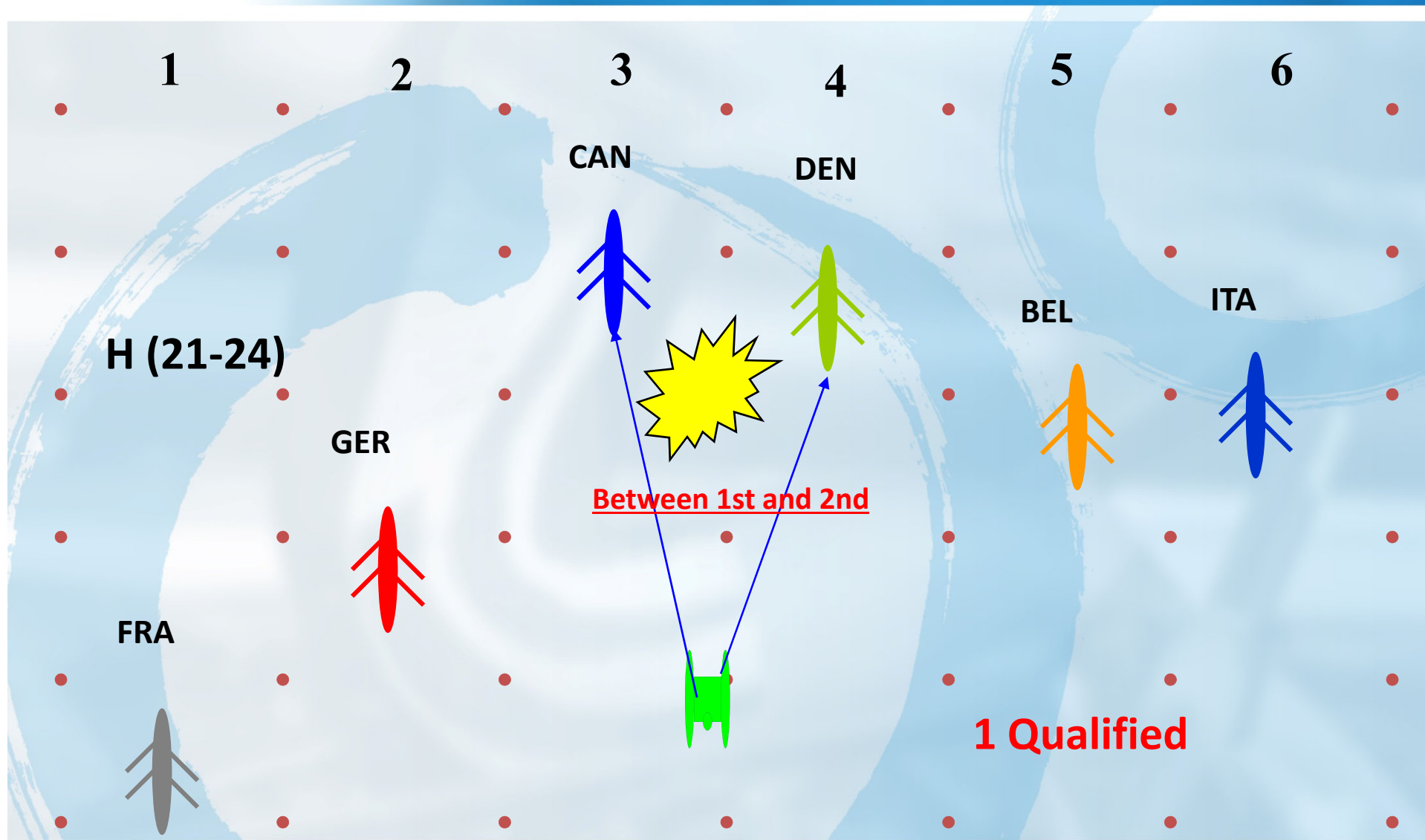
What if a dead heat for the last qualifying place?

Rule 75 : Re-row

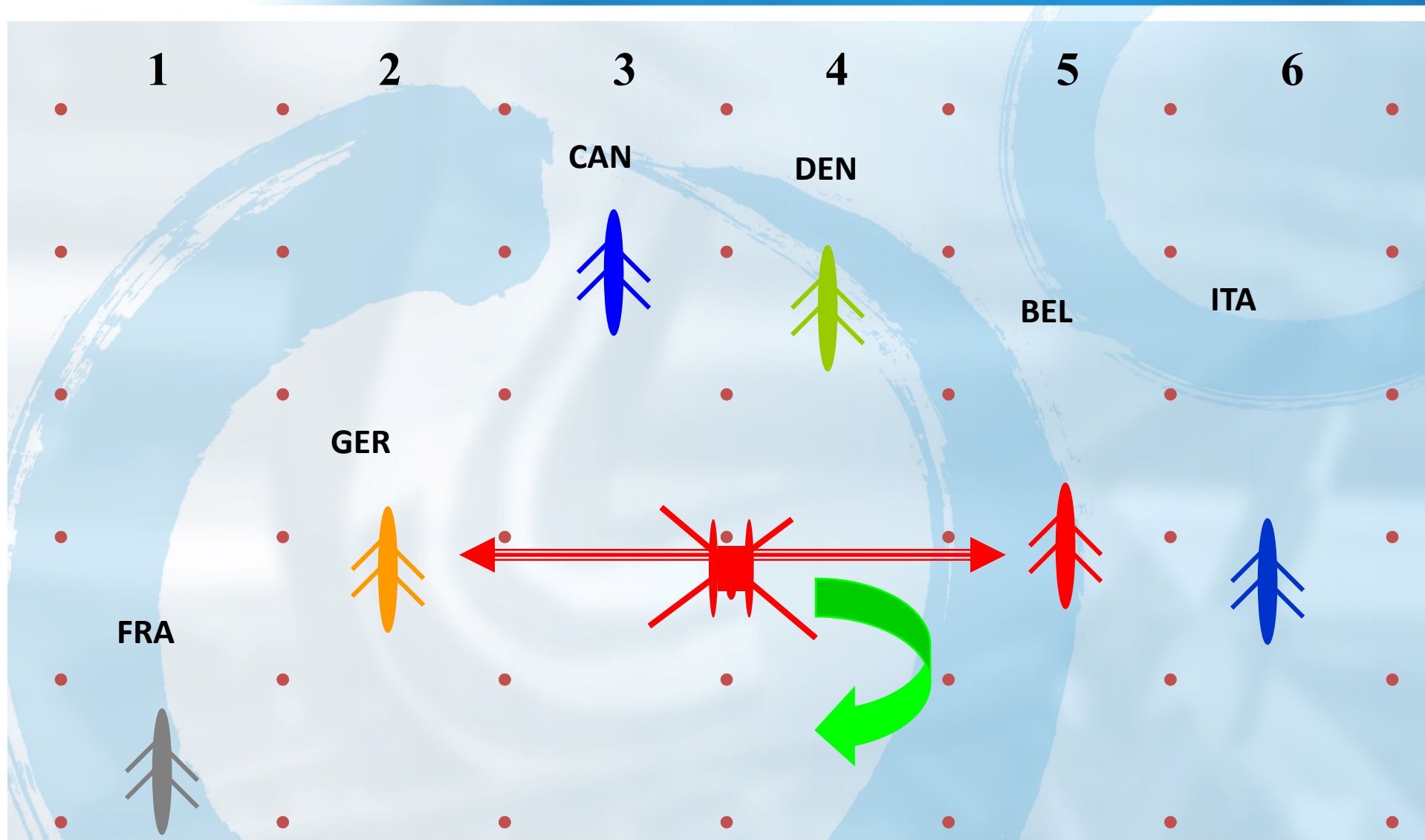
Position of Umpire's Launch (3)



Position of Umpire's Launch (4)



Position of Umpire's Launch (5a)

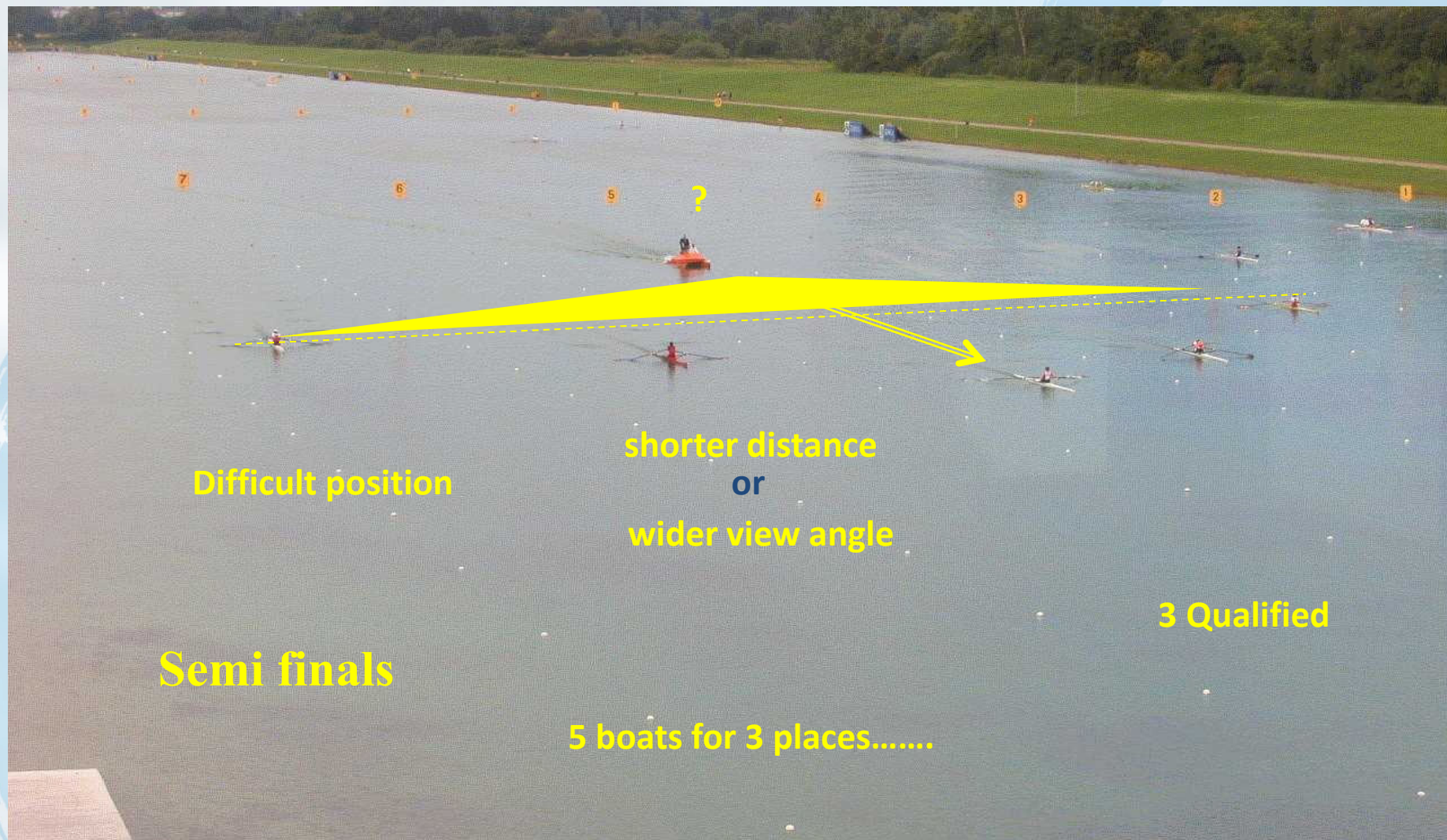


Position of Umpire's Launch (4a)



Do not block crews from seeing their competitors!

Position of Umpire's Launch



Position of Umpire's Launch

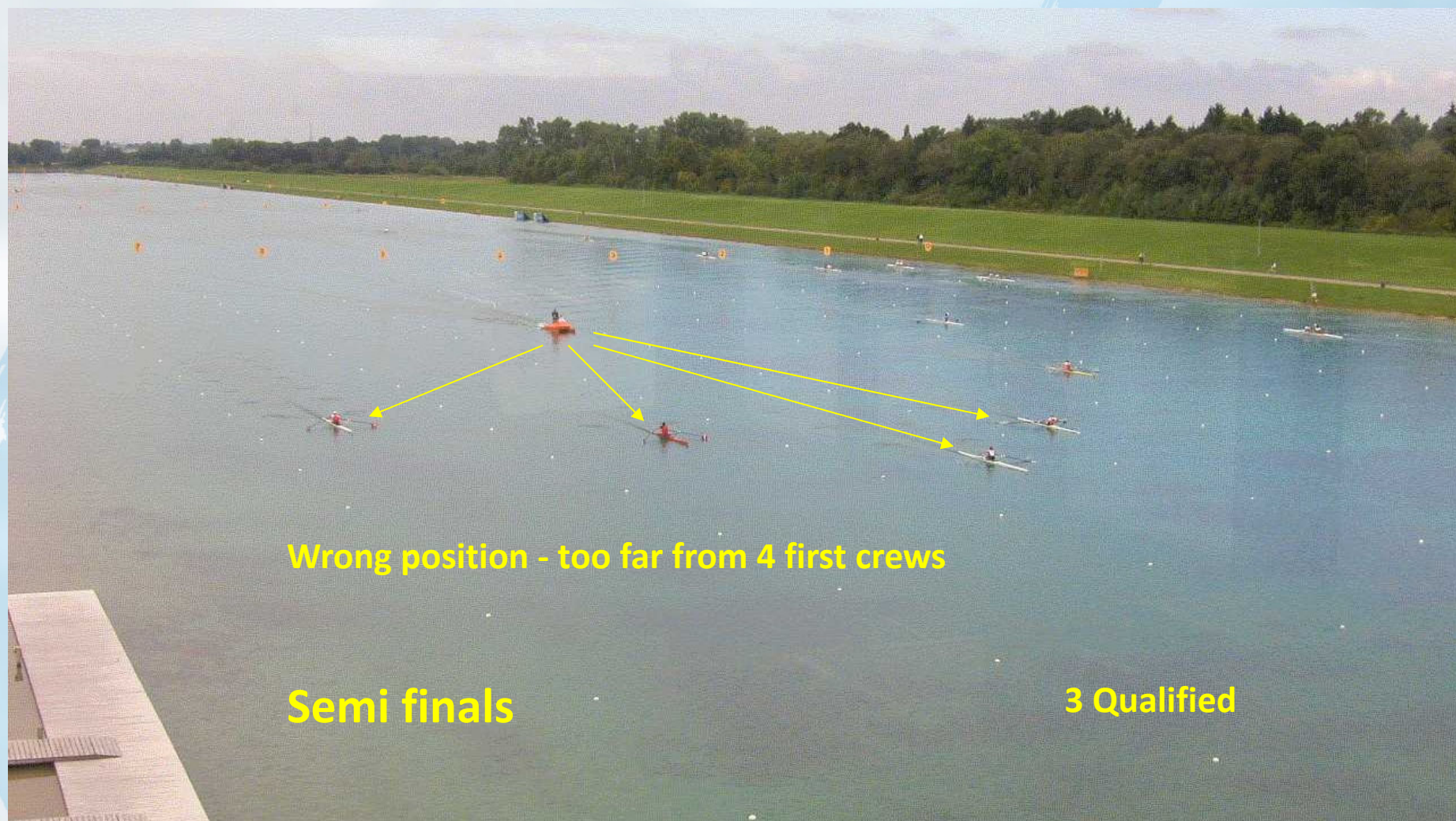


Wrong position - too far and on wrong lane !!!

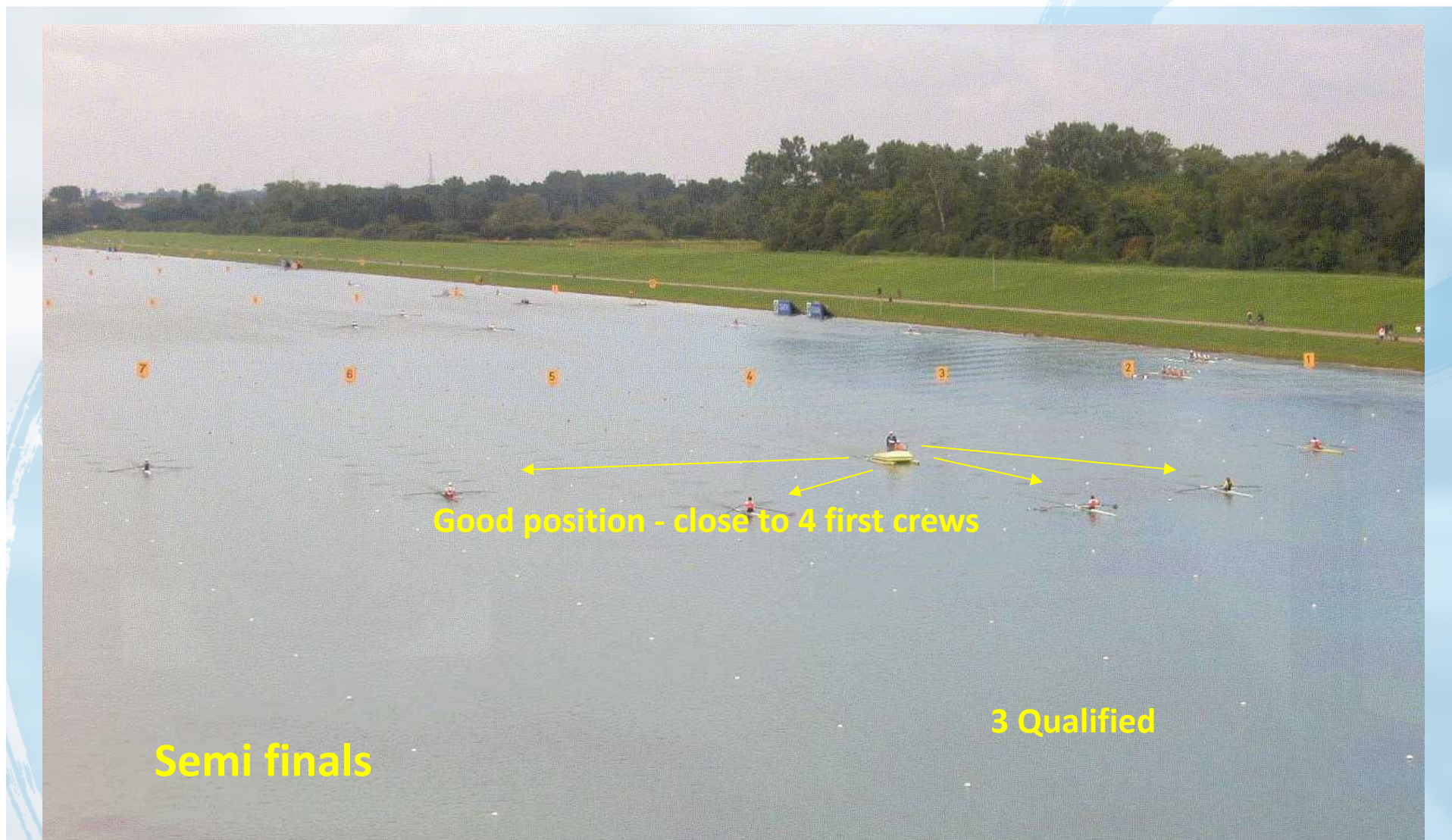
Semi finals

3 Qualified

Position of Umpire's Launch



Position of Umpire's Launch



Position of Umpire's Launch

Umpire drops back when close to finish line



Depends on the situation:

In case of 1x as shown here: no problem

In contrary: with 2- or 4- follow till finish !

Position of Umpire's Launch

The distance covered

- In general, the Umpire has to adapt the position of the Umpire's launch considering the distance already covered.
- In the first part generally stay in the “center” of the field.
- As we approach the finish line, we have to position the launch to the “critical” spot !

Position of Umpire's Launch

2 to advance





4 QUALIFIED

1100 meter

CLOSE TO CRITICAL SPOT

Umpire Position

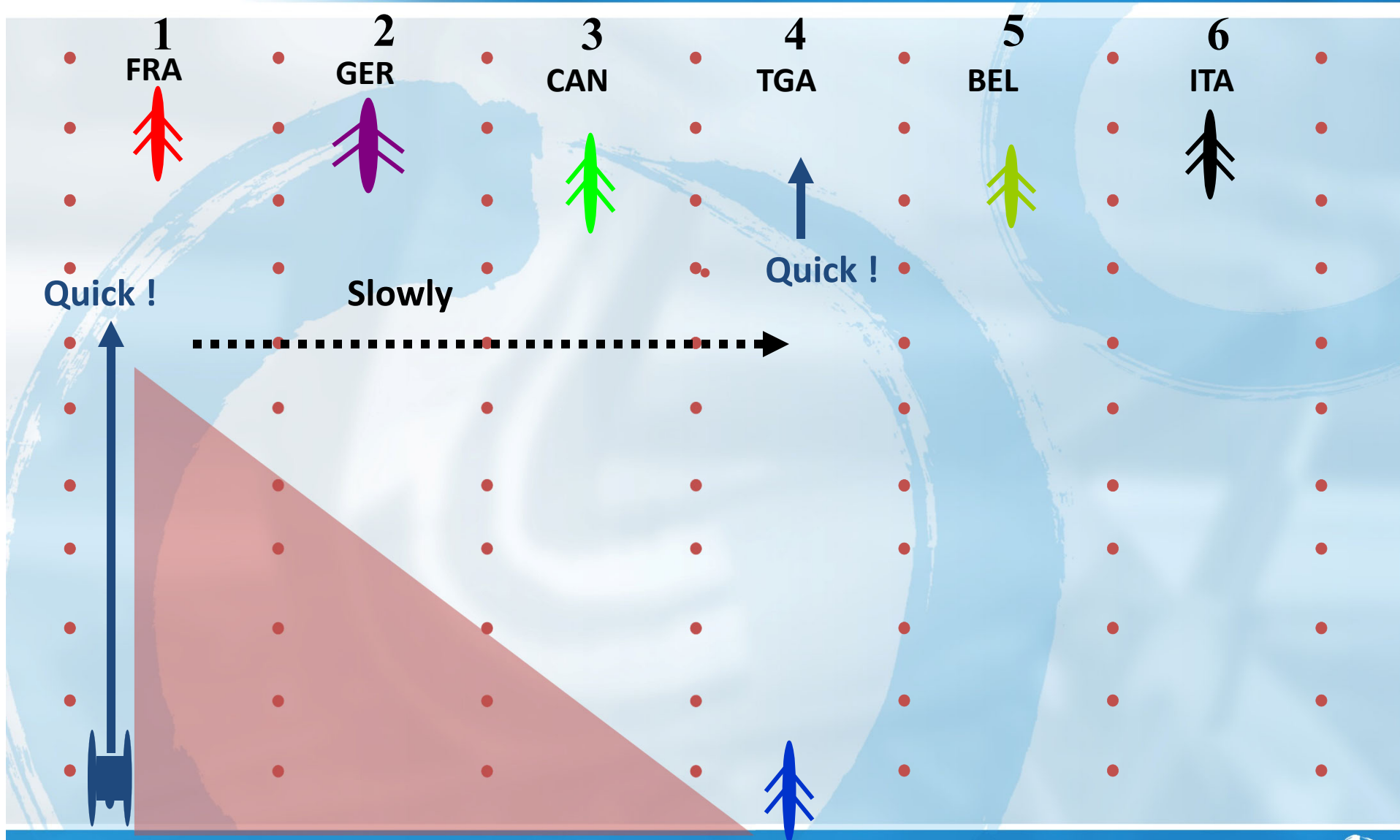


Position of Umpire's Launch

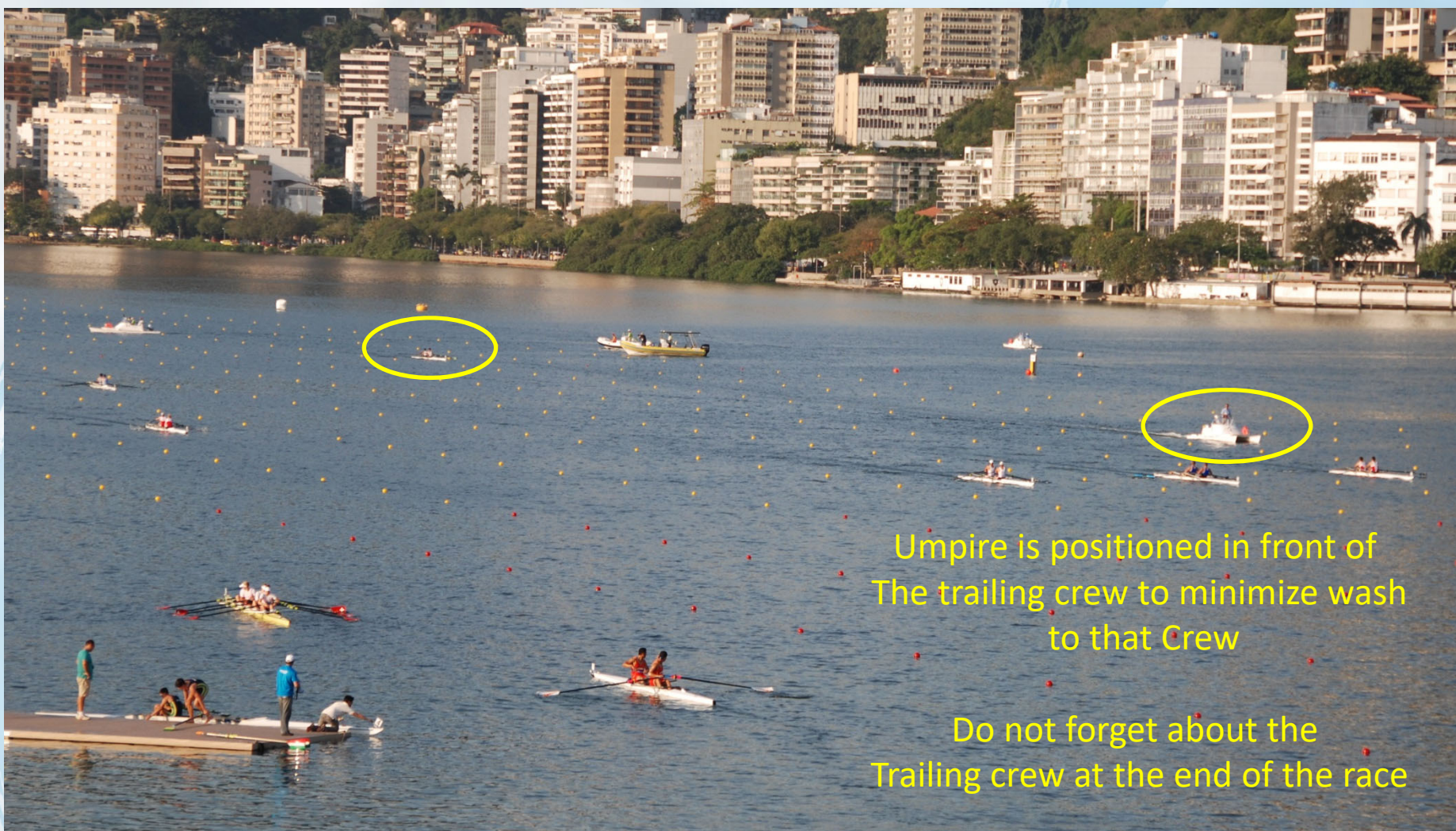
The value of the participating crews

- The Umpire needs to know the result of the participating crews in their previous “rounds”.
- Also the “usual” partition of their efforts over the 2000 meter distance.
- Finally: in the case of very slow or less experienced crews, be ready to overtake them in the most acceptable way.

Take-over by Umpire's launch



Repechage M2x 1750 meters 1-3 advance



Umpire is positioned in front of
The trailing crew to minimize wash
to that Crew

Do not forget about the
Trailing crew at the end of the race

Umpiring on the water

Obstacles

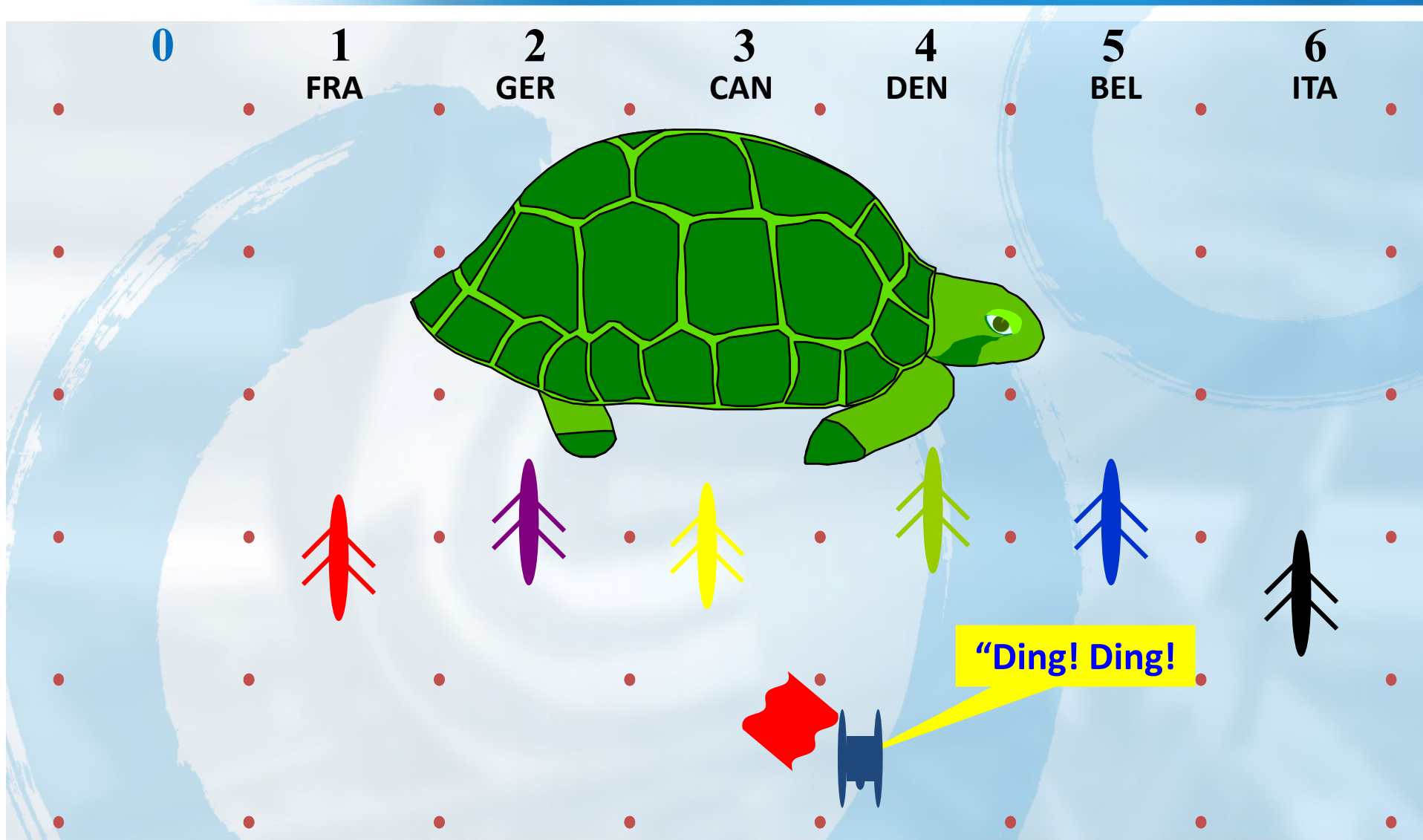
- An obstacle within the course.
- An obstacle outside the course.
- “Border” cases.

Obstacles

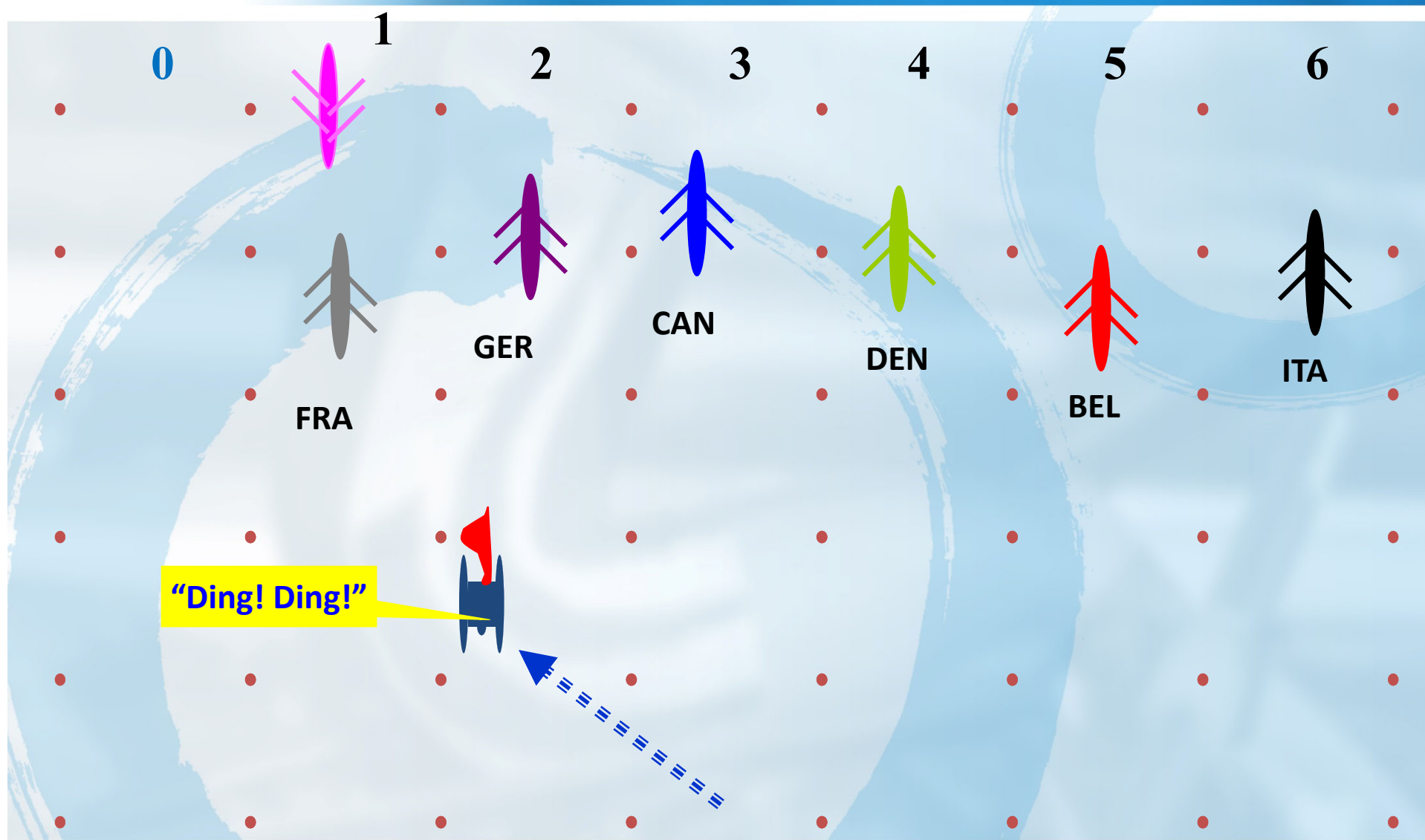
Within the course

- In general, in the case of an “inevitable” obstacle within the course, the Umpire will ring the bell and wave the **RED flag**.
- This means that all crews have to stop.
- The reason is simple: Unequal conditions for some of the crews.

Obstacles within the course (1)



Obstacles within the course (2)



Obstacles within the course (3)



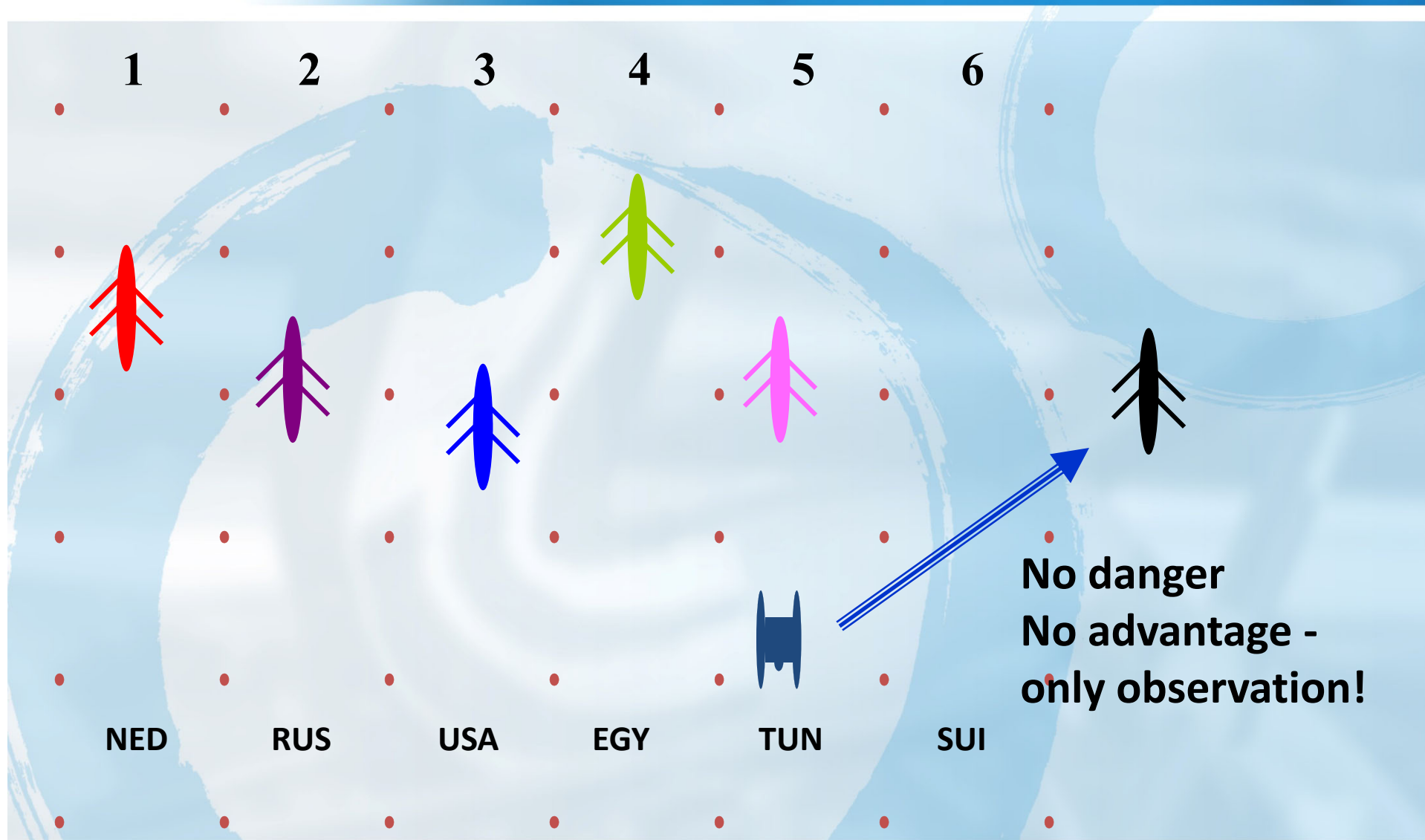
Zürich Rowing
World Cup -
Seville 2001

Obstacles

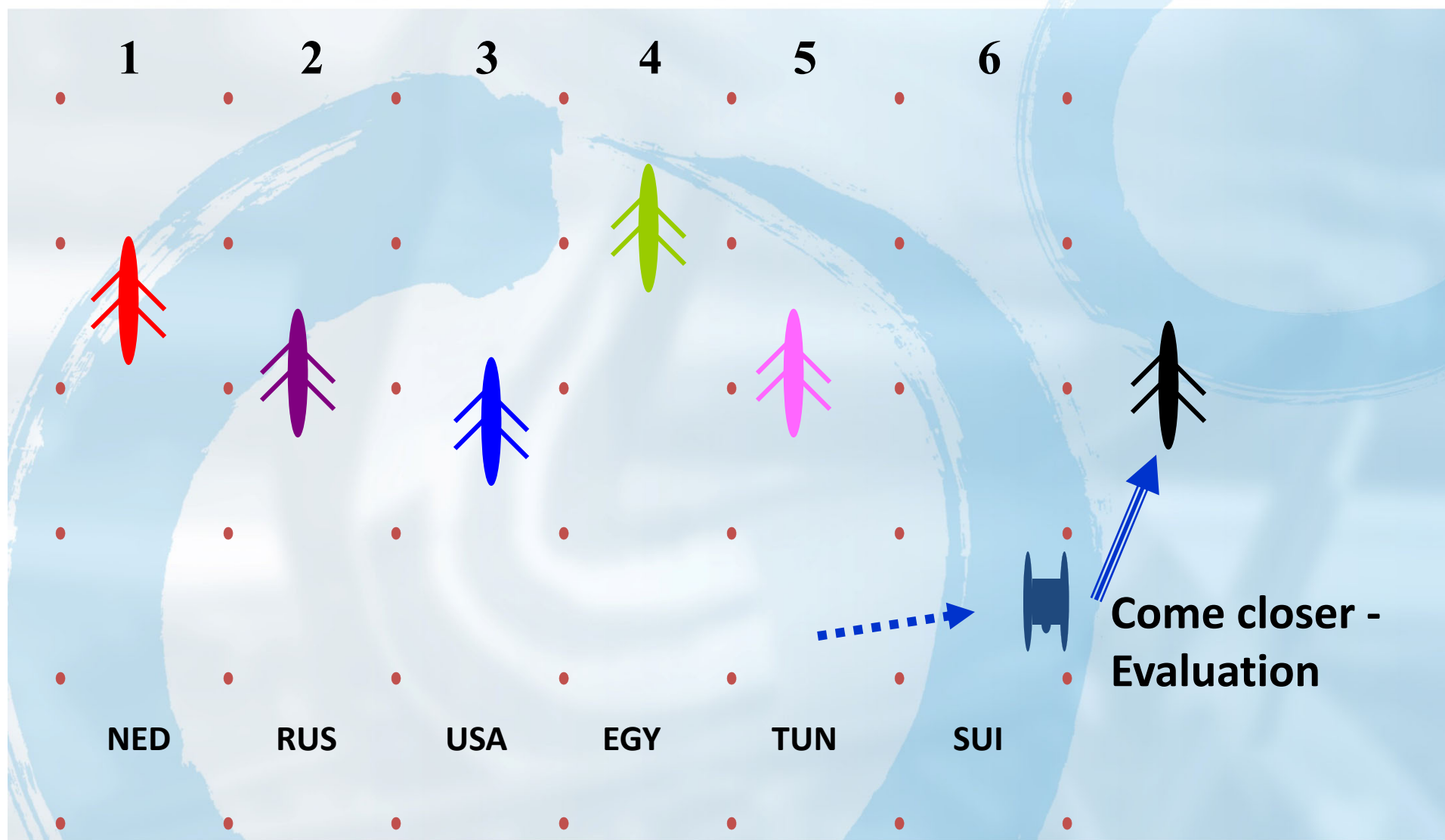
Outside the course

- A crew may leave his lane in certain conditions:
 - * no disadvantage to other crews.
 - * no advantage for themselves.
 - * no danger for themselves.
- If there is a danger to the crew, the Umpire must stop the crew by raising the WHITE flag!
- Wording: “XXX Obstacle !” and “ XXX Stop !”
- After correcting its course, the crew may start rowing again.

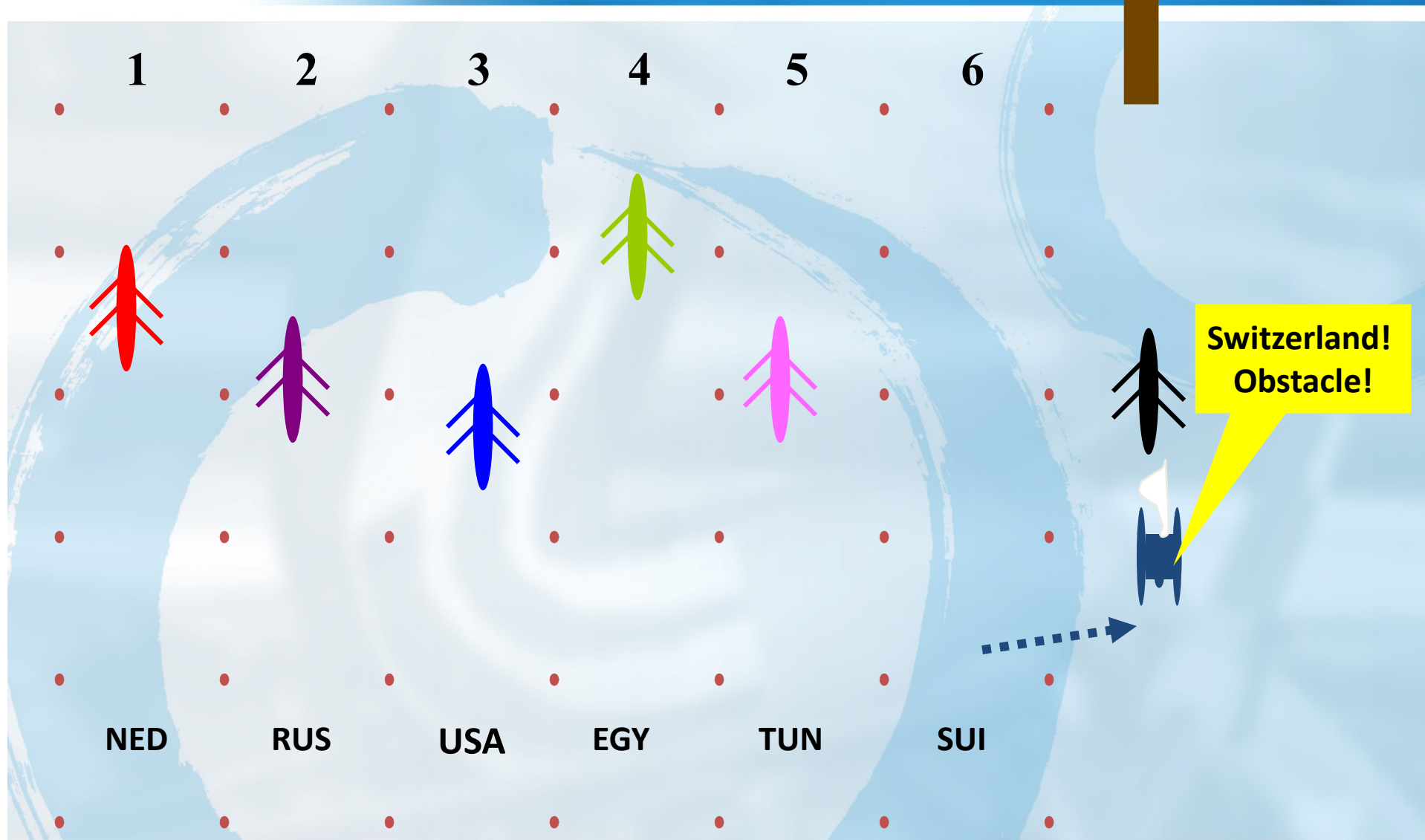
Obstacles outside the course (1)



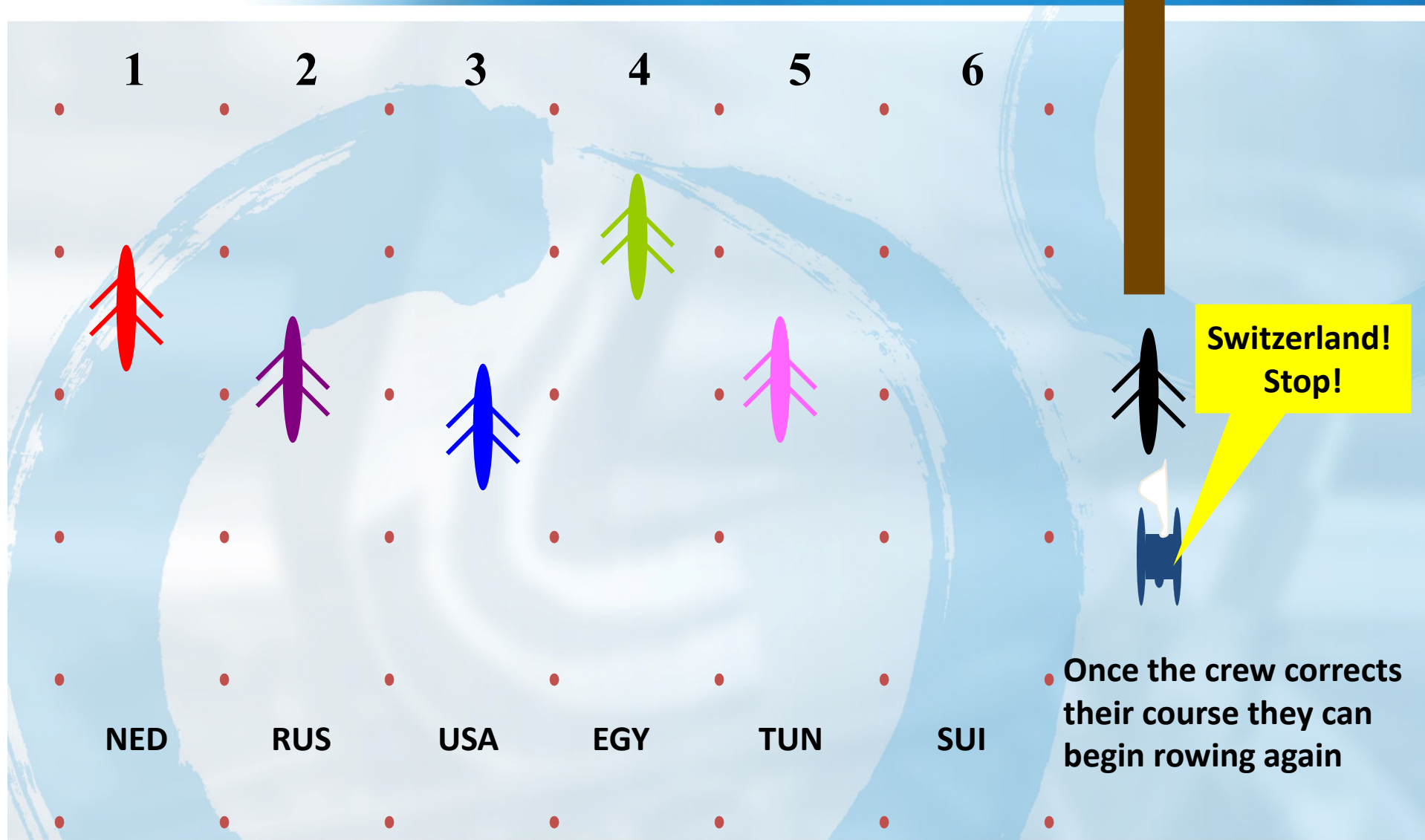
Obstacles outside the course



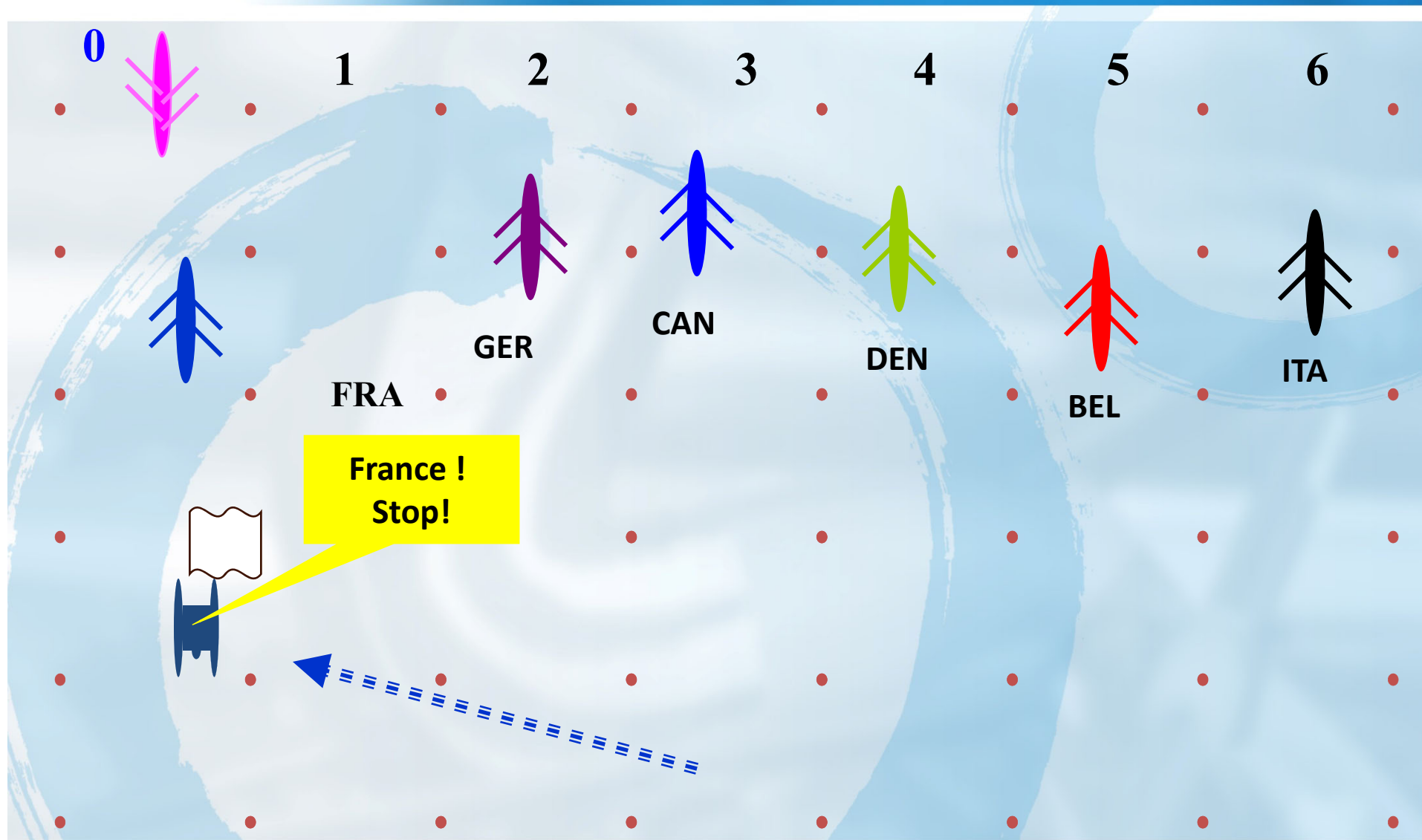
Obstacles outside the course (3)



Obstacles outside the course (4)



Obstacles outside the course (5)

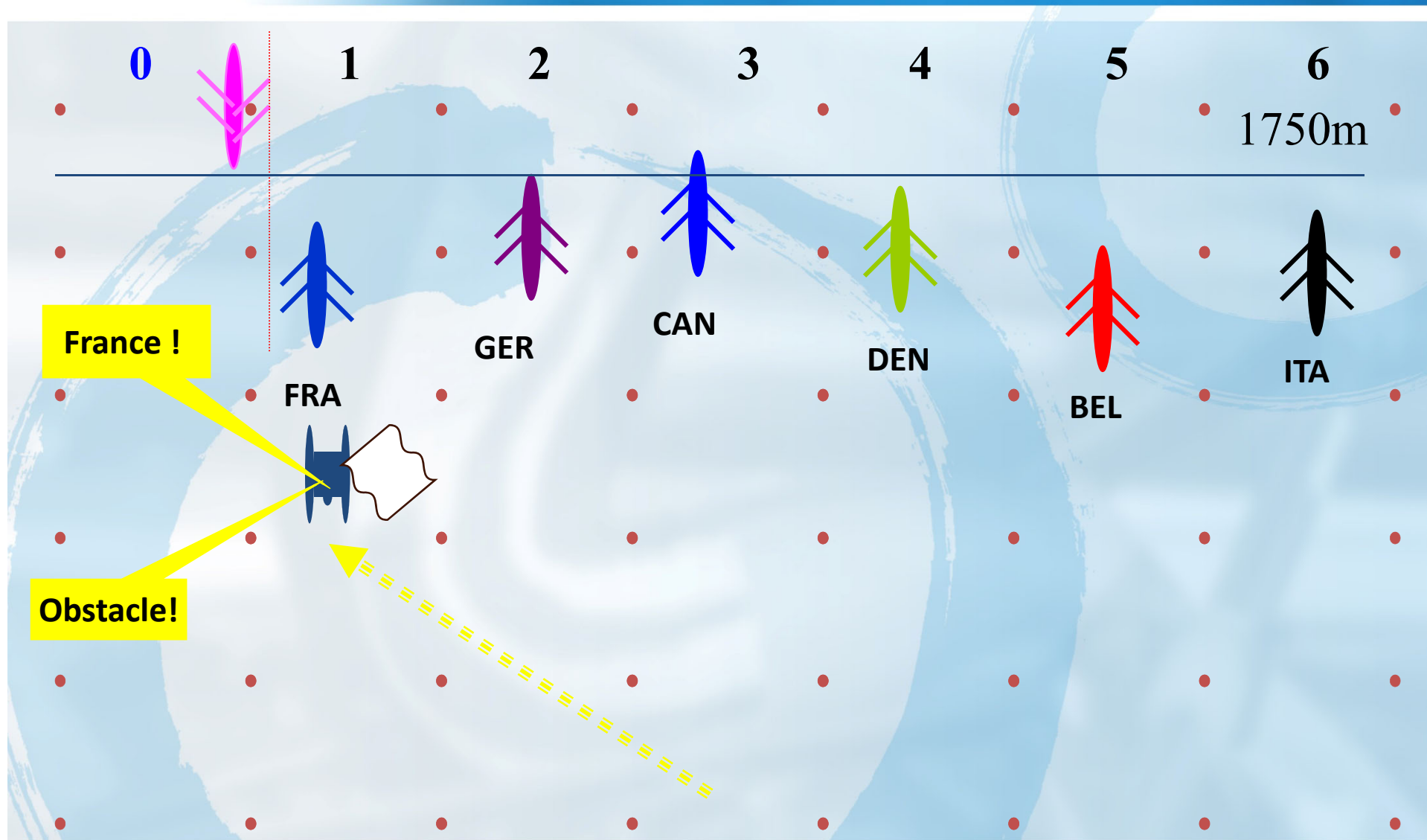


Obstacles

“Border” cases

- In certain situations it is quite difficult to take the appropriate decision.
- Knowing that we can not “steer” the crews, it is sometimes difficult to take the “right” decision,
 - Example: when that situation occurs only some meters before the finish line and if we can not judge whether a collision really will take place.

Obstacles - “border” cases

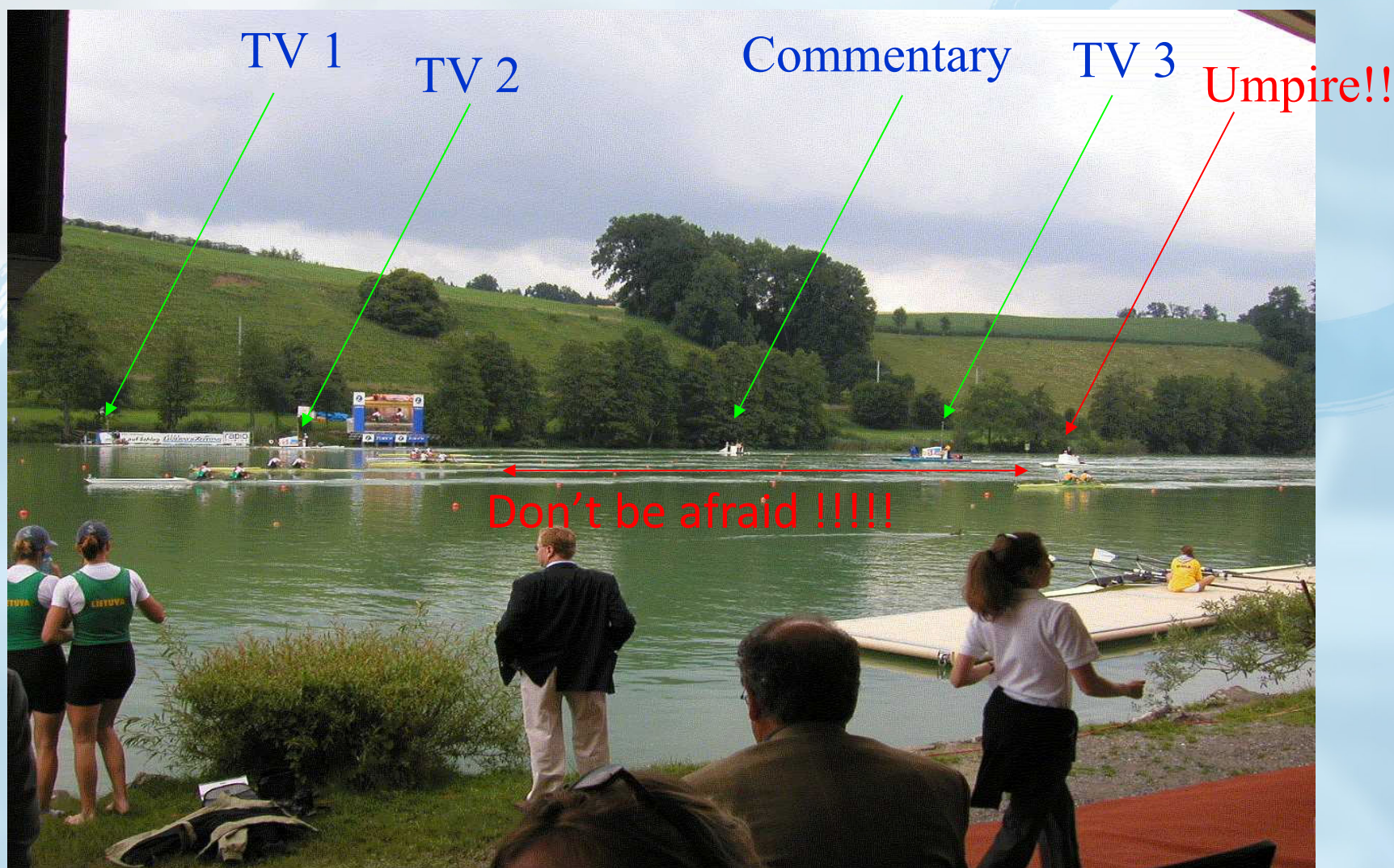


Umpiring and Media: “L’entente cordiale”...





FA : About 50 meter from the finish





The Umpire is in control of the race

- Do not be afraid to “re-position” the media launch

Umpiring on the water

Bad weather conditions

- Before the start.
- During the race.
- Alternative programs in cases of unfair weather conditions.

Bad weather conditions

Before the start

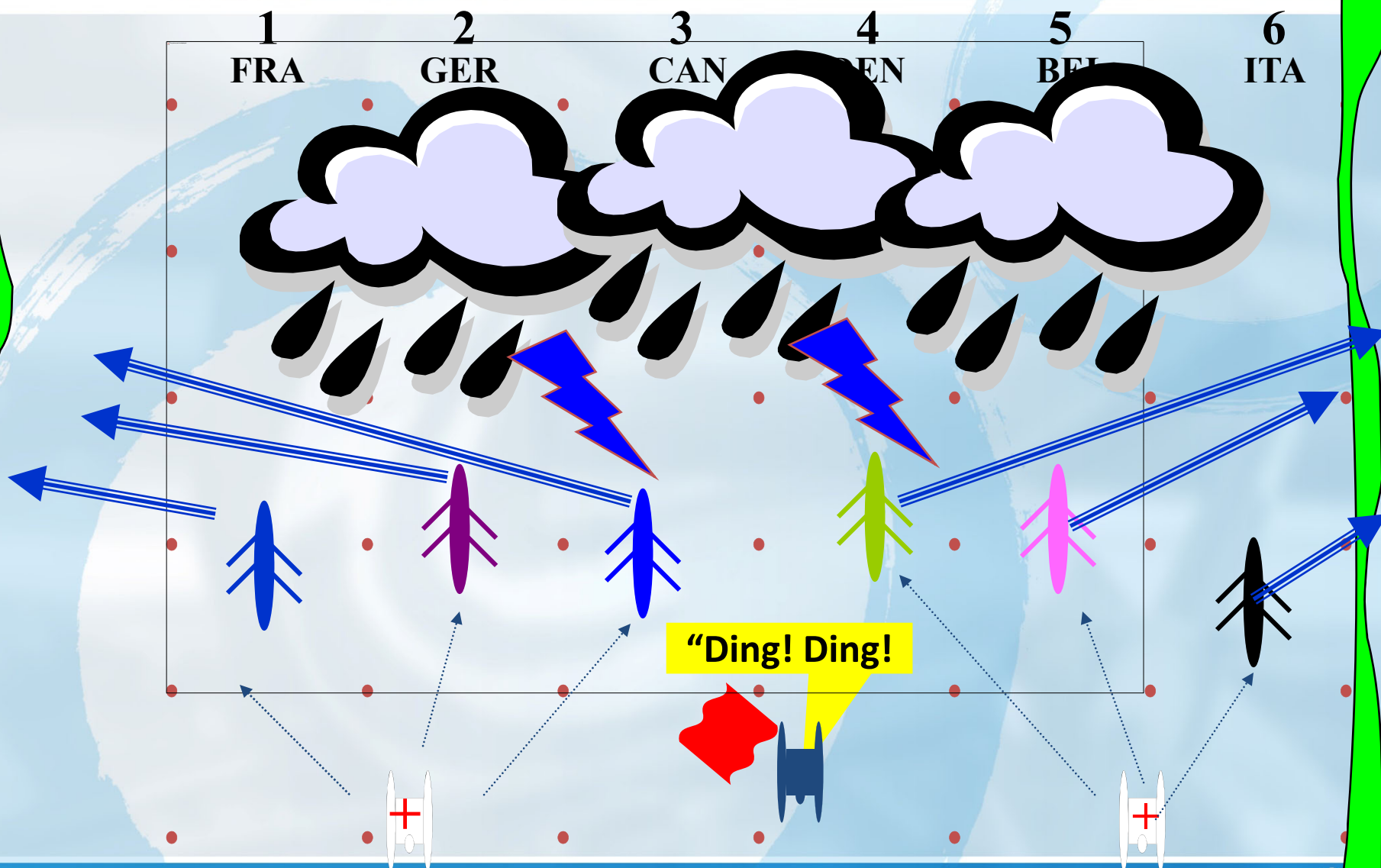
- Before the start, to be assured that the race can take place in “equal” and “acceptable” conditions.
- Therefore:
 - Consult the Colleagues of the Jury.
 - Consult the Fairness Committee and/or Weather Forecast through the Organizing Committee.
- Certainly be sure that all crews can race in equal conditions.

Adverse weather conditions

During the race

- Priority to the safety of the crews and the volunteers, for example being on the start installations in the middle of a lake.
- The Umpire must coordinate the operations to secure all crews, including those being in the warming-up and cooling-down zones.

Adverse weather conditions during the race



Adverse weather conditions



Luzern 2011



Adverse weather conditions

Alternative programs - unfair weather conditions

- Fairness Committee (3 people)
- Choice of the appropriate program.
In the choice always a preference for A, B and C before D.

Adverse weather conditions

Alternative programs - unfair weather conditions

The Fairness Committee may decide to:

- A. To use the lanes offering the most equal conditions.
- B. To recommend a change in the time table.
- C. To suspend racing when the weather conditions are or are about to come unfair or unrowable
- D. To re-allocate the lanes for each individual race, using the rankings from the previous round to put the crews with the better ^(°) rankings in the better lanes. ((°) seeded crews - fastest crews in time-trial)

The Executive Committee may take the further actions of:

- A. Starting racing earlier (with proper notice)
- B. Resume racing when conditions have improved
- C. Omit a round and use results from the previous round
- D. Implement a time trial by race
- E. Implement a time trial for all remaining crews in an event
- F. Reduce the length of the race course

Bad weather conditions

Time-Trial System

- See separate Time Trial Presentation

Umpiring Incidents

- In general.
- During the race.
- After the finish.

Incidents

In general

- The main principles to be followed by an Umpire are:
 - to be alert
 - to observe
 - to make a clear intervention
 - to make a detailed analysis
 - not to be in a hurry
 - to observe the rights and the obligations of each crew.

Incidents

During the race

- During the whole race observe on regular basis each crew.
- To “foresee” is better than to “heal” ...
- Do not act too early.
- Do not act when there is no need.
- Clear and direct intervention.
- The decision does not need to be instantly.

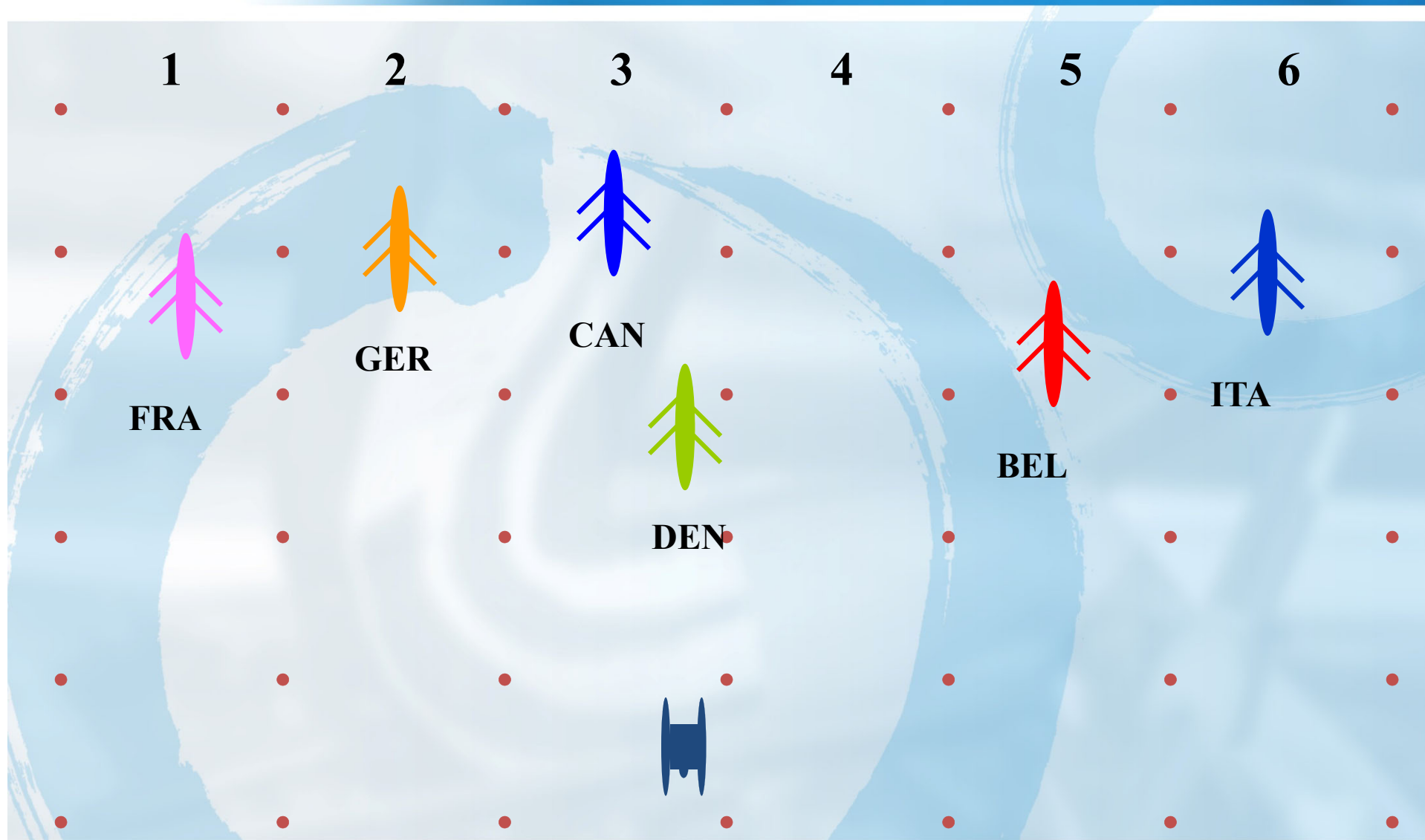
Incidents

During the Race

During the race, if a crew impedes or interferes with any of its opponents or gains any advantage thereby, it may be sanctioned **without prior warning or other notification** from the Umpire.

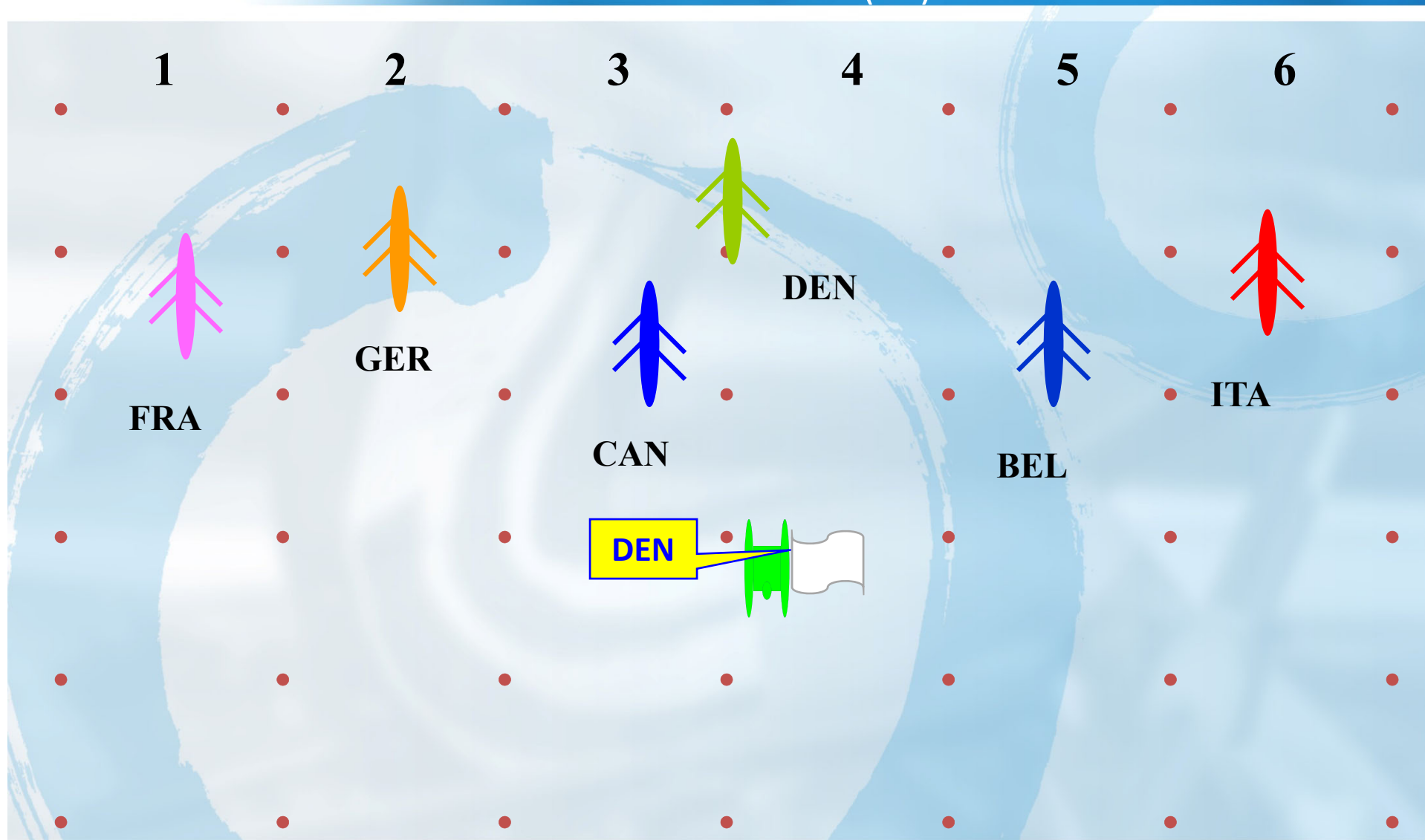
The reason: not enough time to give prior warning during the race

Position of the Umpire's Launch (2a)

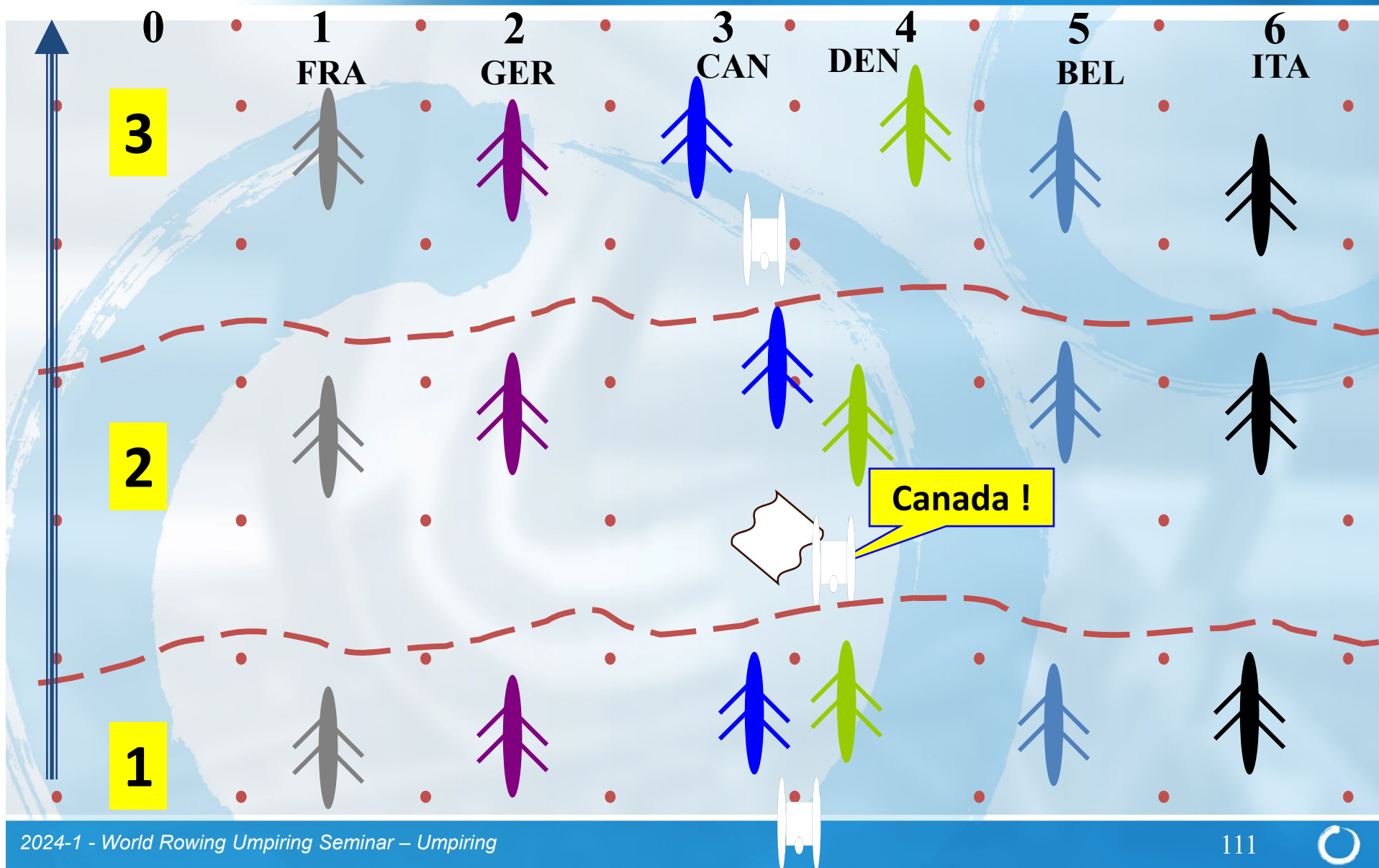


Position of the Umpire's Launch

(2b)



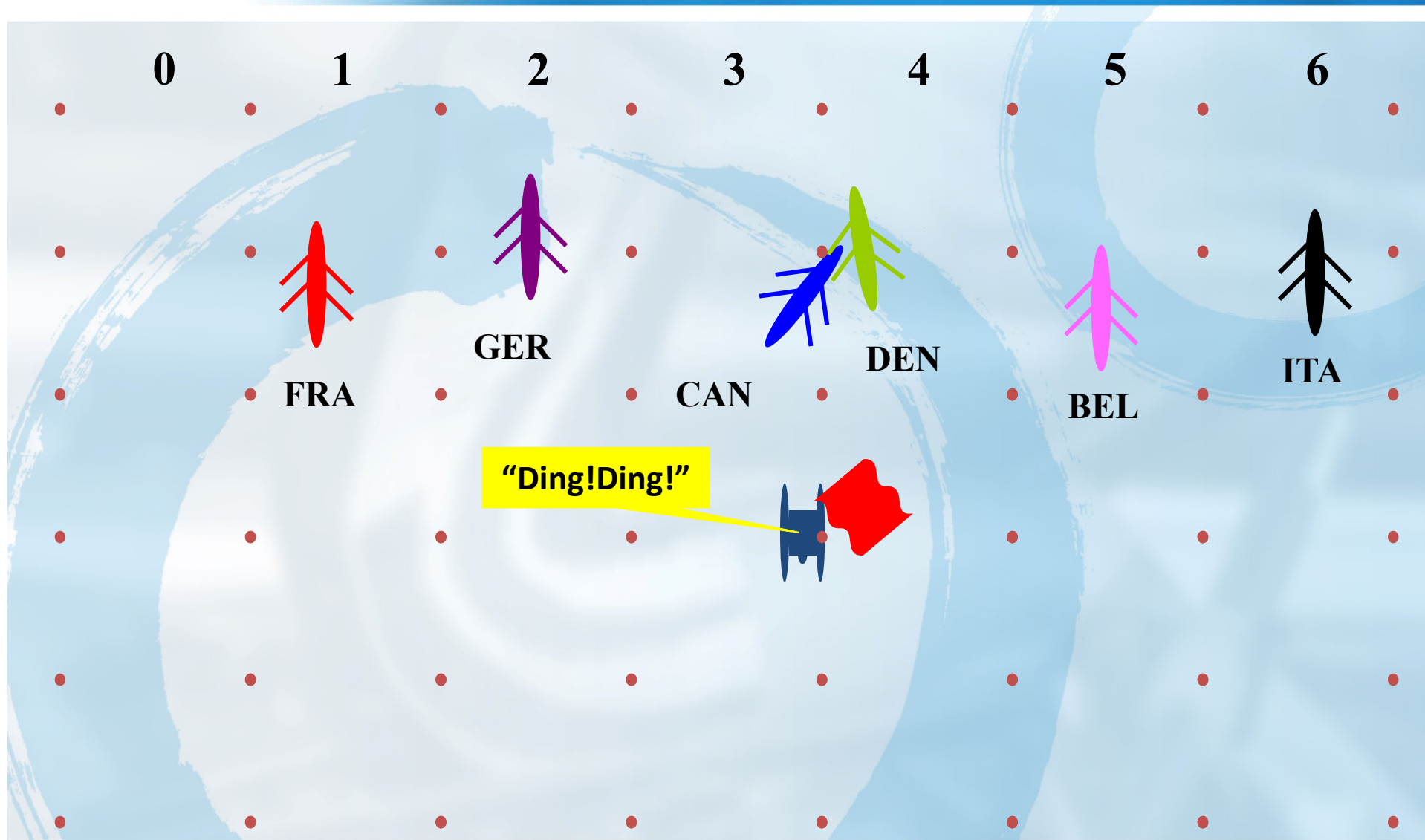
Incidents during the race (1)



Final A – 4+ 1700 meters



Incidents during the race (2)



Incidents

After the finish (1)

- Two “situations”:
 - A . The crew is not giving any signal of objection.
However the Umpire may take a decision without objection!
 - B . The crew gives a signal of objection.
By raising their hand or getting the attention of the Umpire.
The Umpire must meet with the crew and must listen to them,
before taking any action or decision.
- If the Umpire thinks the race was regular, he raises the white flag !

Incidents

After the finish (2)

- If the Umpire thinks the race was irregular or if he has to continue his inquiry before taking a decision, he has to raise the red flag!
- This means that the Judges at the Finish may not publish any result sheet, before the Umpire has taken a decision.
- Taking in account all available data, the Umpire will take a decision.

General principles:

- A Re-Row is a second running of a race involving some or all crews of that race or same oval of an event.
- The Umpire shall decide if a Re-Row is required
 - The Board of the Jury, or Executive Committee may also a Re-Row
- A Re-Row shall be over the full distance of the race.

Re-Rows

- The Umpire may require a Re-Row if the Re-Row is needed to ensure fairness of competition when:
 - a. The Umpire stops a race before the finish because the race was interrupted by weather or outside influences
 - b. There is interference between crews and a Re-Row is required to restore the chances of a crew
 - c. A dead heat where required by the Rules of Racing
 - d. Other special situations decided by the Umpire.

Re-Rows

- The Umpire will decide which crews in the original race or same level of an event shall be included in the Re-Row
- Where the original race was completed, the Umpire may exempt or exclude one or more crews from the Re-Row
- A Re-Row should take place the same day and not less than 2 hours after the original race (maybe reduced for special reason)
- For International Regattas, the Umpire may order a Re-Row over all or part of the course and consider the following in the decision
 - a. Distance already covered by the race
 - b. Time remaining to the next round
 - c. Overall fairness to the crews
 - d. Other relevant matters

The Finish



1. Show the white flag to the competitors – Give them warning in case they still want to make an objection
For an PR3 (former LTA) event say “White Flag” when showing white flag

2. Show the white flag to the Finish Judges

The race is concluded when the Umpire confirms the results by raising the white flag or otherwise confirms the results.



Thank you !