

# 2026 Changes to the World Rowing Rules of Racing

February 18, 2026



On February 17, 2026, the World Rowing Council approved the proposed changes to the World Rowing Rules of Racing

As a reminder, the actual Rules can only be changed at a Quadrennial Congress which are held after the Olympic Games

The Bye-Laws and Regulations can be changed by the Council at any time.

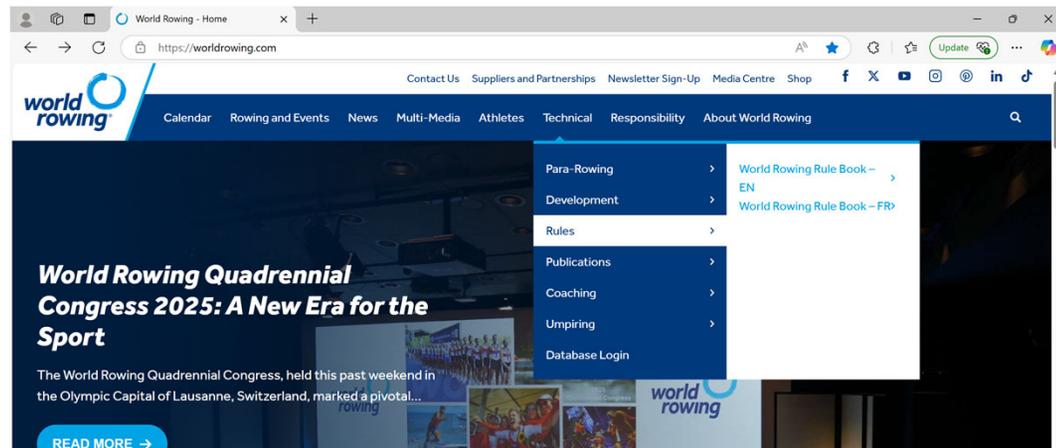
It is the current practice of the Council to approve the changes once per year early in the year.

# The 2026 Rules of Racing

## Finding the Rules

As a reminder World Rowing (“WR”) is no longer sending out printed copies of the Rules or Racing.

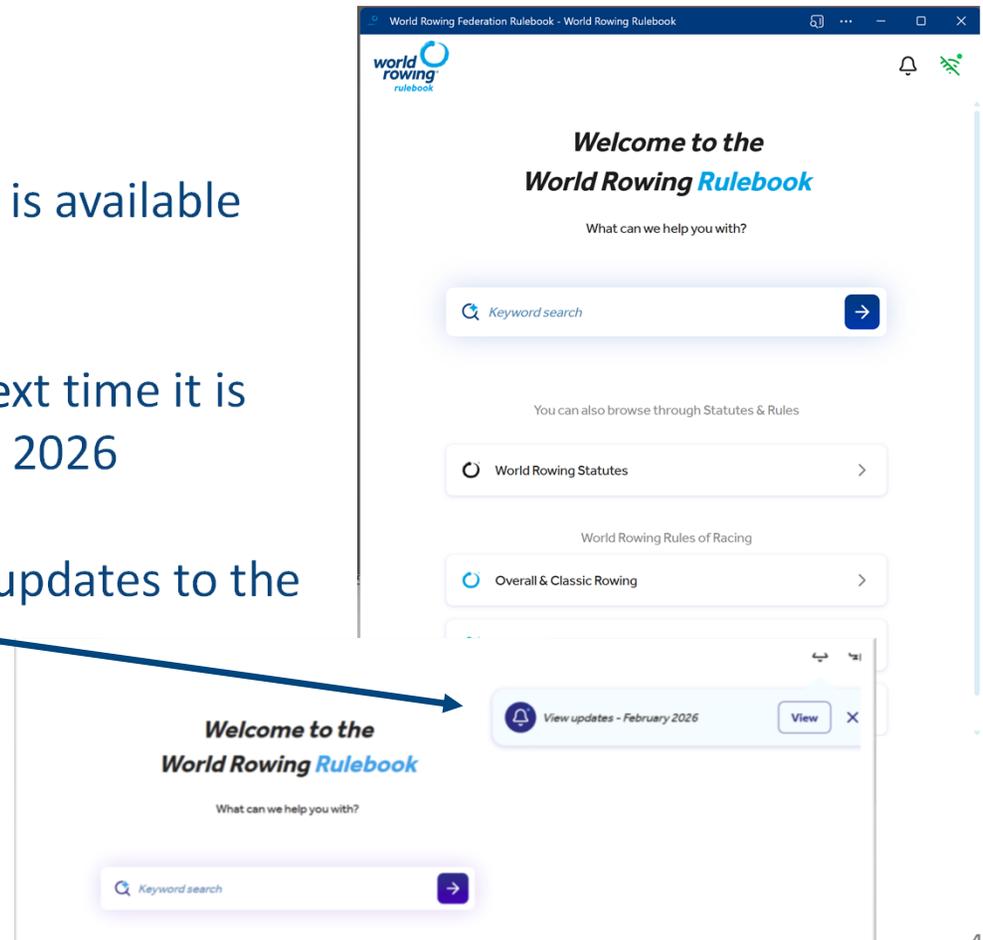
- The Rules are posted on the World Rowing website <https://worldrowing.com/> by March 7, 2026
- The changes will be highlighted or marked in the document



# The 2026 Rules of Racing

## Finding the Rules

- The new World Rowing (“WR”) Rules App is available at: [rules.worldrowing.com](https://rules.worldrowing.com)
- The App will update automatically the next time it is connected to the internet after March 7, 2026
- In the App, there is a “bell” to show the updates to the Rules, Bye-Laws and Regulations



# *The 2026 Rules of Racing*

## *Rules Update Seminar*



- In this presentation, we will review the major and substantial changes to the 2026 Rules Bye-Laws and Regulations
- There are a number of small “housekeeping” changes that will not be covered in this presentation  
e.g. spelling corrections, updating references, correcting outline numbers and letters.
- If you see something that you feel needs to be corrected, updated or improved, please contact a member of the Rules Working Group or the Umpiring Commission.

- Rule 64 Adverse Weather Conditions  
Bye-laws Alternative Programmes in cases of Adverse Weather Conditions
  - Under the new progression system, crews are *ranked* on both placing and times and not just placing,
  - Therefore, here and throughout the Bye-Laws and Regulations references to “placings” and “finishes” are changed to “rankings”

### Option D

To prioritise the lanes for each individual race using the ~~placings~~ ranking from the previous round to put the crews with similar placings from the previous round into adjoining lanes and giving the crews having achieved better ~~placings~~ ranking better lanes.

Where two or more crews have the same ~~placing~~ ranking in the immediately previous round (e.g. each were heat winners), then there shall be a new draw for the crews with the same ~~placing~~ ranking supervised by a member of the Jury, to determine their reallocated lanes.

### Rule 65 Re-Rows Bye-laws

- Under the progression system, when there is a dead-heat or interference, a re-row maybe required to determine which crew will advance to the next round on time
- The re-row may need to involve crews in the same round but from different races
- A new 1)e) to Rule 65 Bye-Law allows a re-row to include crews from different races in the same round to determine who will advance on the basis of time

#### Bye-Laws to Rule 65 – Re-Rows

- 1) The Umpire may require a race to be re-rowed in accordance with this Rule if the Umpire considers that a Re-Row is necessary to ensure the fairness of the competition and, in particular but not exhaustively, in any one of the following circumstances:
  - a) A race which has been started but is interrupted by weather conditions or other external influences and is stopped by the Umpire before the race is finished;
  - b) There is interference between crews during a race and the Umpire determines that in order to restore the chances of a crew the race should be re-rowed with all or some of the crews;
  - c) A dead-heat, where this is required by the Rules of Racing;
  - d) Other special situations as decided by the Umpire to ensure the fairness of the competition.
  - e) For the purposes of this Rule, where progression to the next round is determined by comparing the times of crews in more than one race in the same round, then the crews whose times are compared shall be deemed to be in "a race".
    - i) Under 1)b) above, in order to restore the chances of a crew, a re-row may involve crews from different races in the same round.
    - ii) Under 1)c) above, where two or more such crews have the same finish time, a dead heat between those crews shall be declared.

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### Rule 65 Re-Rows Bye-laws – Example 1

- In the W2- there are 15 crews – (3 heats - top 2 from each heat and next 6 best times progress to SF)

#### Results of Heats:

H1	Rank	Crew	Time
	1	FRA	6:57.51
	2	ITA	6:58.04
	3	USA	7:00.17
	4	IRL	7:11.33
	5	AIN	7:15.56

H2	Rank	Crew	Time
	2	SRB	7:01.03
	2	CHI	7:02.42
	3	GBR	7:03.44
	4	CZE	7:03.57
	5	HGK	7:37.3

H3	Rank	Crew	Time
	1	ROU	6:51.72
	2	SUI	6:59.23
	3	LTU	7:03.76
	4	AUS	7:09.32
	5	DEN	7:11.33

#### Progression:

1.H1	ROU	6:51.72
1.H2	FRA	6:57.51
1.H3	SRB	7:01.03

2.H1	ITA	6:58.04
2.H2	SUI	6:59.23
2.H3	CHI	7:02.42

1.HT	USA	7:00.17
2.HT	GBR	7:03.44
3.HT	CZE	7:03.57
4.HT	LTU	7:03.76
5.HT	AUS	7:09.32

6.HT	DEN	07:11.3352
6.HT	IRL	07:11.3352

8.HT	HGK	7:37.3
9.HT	AIN	7:15.56

Crews advancing on Place

Next 6 crews with the fastest times advance to Semifinal

Dead Heat for 6<sup>th</sup> place

- Look at full capability of timing system
- If no difference → Re-Row between the two 6.HT crews 8

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### Rule 65 Re-Rows Bye-laws – Example 2

- In the M4- there are 28 crews – (5 heats - top 2 from each heat and next 14 best times progress to QF)
  - In Heat 1, Crew A & Crew B are in the lead at 1900 metres
  - Crew A in lane 3 moves into lane 4 and interferes with Crew B
  - Both Crews are stopped and lose time
  - The two crews finish the race
    - Crew A – 5<sup>th</sup> in Heat 1, 27<sup>th</sup> ranked in overall time
    - Crew B – 6<sup>th</sup> in Heat 1, 28<sup>th</sup> ranked in overall time
  - How to restore the ability of Crew B to advance?
    - The Umpire excludes Crew A for interfering for with Crew B but Crew B still ranked 27<sup>th</sup>
    - Would Crew B have advanced on time?
    - Crew C which rowed in Heat 4 had the slowest time (14.HT) that advanced to the Quarterfinals
    - Question: If Crew B did not suffer from interference, would it have produced a time faster than Crew C?
    - Re-row between Crew B and Crew C

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- Appendix R2 – Bye-Laws to Rule 28 – Boats and Equipment
  - During the 2025 season, concerns were raised about crews using substances on boats that changed the interaction between the hull and water
  - The Equipment and Technology Commission has found that, despite manufacturer’s claims, the products did not improve the speed of a rowing boat
  - Some of the products do have the potential of leaving harmful residue that may go into the water and harm the environment (e.g. nano particles)
  - A rule is added prohibiting the use of any substances capable of leaving any residue on the boat
  - Additionally “blood oxygenation” is added to the list in section 5)b) of data that a rower may see during a race.

4) *No substances or structures (including riblets) capable of modifying the natural properties of water or of the boundary layer of the ~~hull/water interface~~ at the interface between the hull and water shall be used. No substances capable of leaving residue on the boat or oars shall be used.*

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- Appendix R2 – Bye-Laws to Rule 28 – Boats and Equipment
  - The data transmission Rule is left unchanged for 2026.
  - During 2026, discussions will be held with the stake holders to determine the future direction for data transmission to and from the boat

*5) a) Data Transmission – During racing (which shall mean at all times when racing “traffic rules” are in force), no communication with the crew is permitted from outside the boat using electric or electronic equipment. This includes but is not limited to audio transmission, or sending text messages or software communication of any kind. In addition, no data may be sent to the boat except as provided for in paragraph 5.c).*

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### Appendix R3 – Bye-Laws to Rule 31 – Weight of Boats

- Section 7 - The minimum boat weight shall include the fittings *essential* to its use . . .
  - Some of the technology that crews are now allowed take in the boat is “not essential” to the use of the boat
  - Some of this additional equipment can easily be removed prior to boat weighing (e.g. data storage and display devices)
  - Some equipment (e.g. sensor oarlocks) is fixed to the boat and can not be easily removed

- ➔ The Bye-Law now includes:
- the equipment that must be removed before boat weighing
  - a table of weights that must be subtracted from the boat weight for the devices that can not be easily removed

The order of sections 9) e) & f) was changed to clarify the weighing and reporting process

i) The following equipment items shall be removed from the boat prior to boat weighing:

- Logger(box)
- monitors / displays / athlete screen
- any additional. sensors such as boat speed sensor
- transmitter box

ii) The equipment items that are not included in the weight of the boat but where firmly fixed to the boat shall be allowed to remain in the boat during weighing include the following:

- junction boxes (wired system)
- angle sensor
- batteries
- attachments (brackets) for monitors/displays/ athlete screen

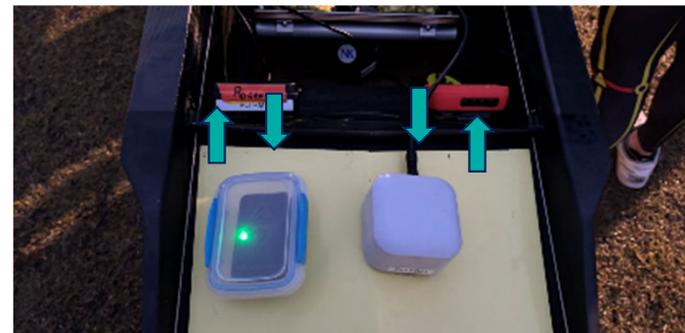
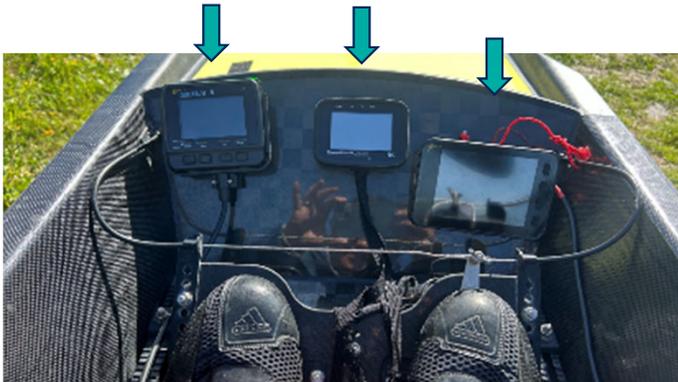
Where these equipment items remain fixed to the boat during boat weighing, following standard weight allowances shall be subtracted from the measured boat weight:

Boat Class	Wireless System (e.g. NK, Xboat)	Wired System (e.g. Peach)
<u>1x</u>	0.2 kg	0.6 kg
<u>2x</u>	0.4 kg	1 kg
<u>2-</u>	0.4 kg	0.8 kg
<u>4x</u>	1 kg	2 kg
<u>4-/4+</u>	0.7 kg	1.5kg
<u>8+</u>	1.4 kg	3 kg

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- Not a part of the weight of the boat and must be removed



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- Not essential to the use of the boat and not easily removable
- ➔ subtract for the devices from the measured boat weight based on type of boat and equipment



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- Appendix R5 – Regatta Roles – Bye-Laws to Rules 36-38
  - A new provision is added to specify that members of the Jury at World Rowing events should not also be representing a member federation team at the same event to prevent the appearance of a conflict of interest

2)f)iv) Members of the Jury at a World Rowing event shall not represent a member federation or team at that event.

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- Appendix R6 – Bye-Laws to Rule 39 - Commercial Publicity, Sponsorship, Advertising and Identifications
  - A new section 1)e)iii) is added to clarifying that within a manufacturers designated space, the manufacturer can display one or more of the identification elements found in 1)e)i) (e.g. Filippi Performance or Concept2 Skinny)
  - There is no change to the size of the manufacturers spaces



1)e)i) "Identification" means the display of a name, designation, trademark, logo or any other distinctive sign or mark of any kind. The following types of Identifications are permitted to be displayed on uniforms and equipment where specified under these Bye-laws:

1)e)iii) Within one manufacturer's Identification, more than one element may be displayed, subject to the overall Identification not exceeding the permitted size.

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- Appendix R7 – Bye-Laws to Rule 58 – Progressions
  - A provision is added to the beginning of Appendix R7 which allows the Executive Committee to approve an alternate progression system for a specific event.
    - Previously Rule 58 allowed only allowed this for a World Rowing Championship
  - The distribution of where crews advancing into the quarterfinals and semifinals are placed is revised.
    - The basic distribution is the 'snake pattern' (see example on next page).
    - Changes are made to:
      - Avoid having the fastest first place crews (1.1.H), the fastest second place crews (1.2.H) and the first crew qualified by time (1.HT), together in the same race in the next round
      - The sum of the ranks of the crews in each race must be the same

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- Appendix R7 – Bye-Laws to Rule 58 – Progressions
  - Example: Case 5 25 – 30 participating crews

### Composition of Quarterfinals

CASE 25-30						
QF1	1.1.H	5.1.H	4.2.H	6.HT	10.HT	14.HT
QF2	2.1.H	1.2.H	5.2.H	5.HT	9.HT	13.HT
QF3	3.1.H	2.2.H	1.HT	4.HT	8.HT	12.HT
QF4	4.1.H	3.2.H	2.HT	3.HT	7.HT	11.HT

### Sum of the Rankings

CASE 25-30						
1	5	9	16	20	24	75
2	6	10	15	19	23	75
3	7	11	14	18	22	75
4	8	12	13	17	21	75

### Composition of Semifinals

All semifinals after quarter finals.						
SF1	1.1.Q	3.1.Q	2.2.Q	4.2.Q	2.3.Q	3.3.Q
SF2	2.1.Q	4.1.Q	1.2.Q	3.2.Q	1.3.Q	4.3.Q

All semifinals after quarter finals.						
1	3	6	8	10	11	39
2	4	5	7	9	12	39

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- Appendix R8 – Time Trials – Bye-laws to Rule 63
  - The old progressions system implemented time trials from 49 or more crews but the new progression requires time trials from 61 or more crews
    - The references to the progression system in Appendix R8 are updated
  - “placing” is updated to “ranking” to keep with the current progression system

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- Appendix R10 – Anti-Doping Bye-Laws
  - Events are added the list of events where athletes can be subject to anti-doping testing
  - Athletes competing in these events are not considered “recreational athletes”
  - Recreational athletes are exempt from reporting requirements.

Within the overall pool of *Rowers* set out above who are bound by and required to comply with these Anti-Doping Bye-Laws, the following *Rowers* shall be considered to be *International-Level Rowers* for the purposes of these Anti-Doping Bye-Laws, and, therefore, the specific provisions in these Anti-Doping Bye-Laws applicable to *International-Level Rowers* (e.g., *Testing*, *TUEs*, whereabouts, and *Results Management*) shall apply to such *Rowers*:

- (a) *Rowers* who participate in the following World Rowing Events:
- World Rowing Cup Regattas;
  - World Rowing Championships for Seniors, U23 and Juniors (Under 19);
  - World Rowing Coastal Endurance Championships;
  - World Rowing Indoor Championships and other international indoor rowing competitions which are organized by World Rowing
  - World Rowing Beach Sprint Championships
  - World Masters Regatta
  - Olympic, Youth Olympic and Paralympic Qualification Regattas;
  - Paralympic Games Rowing Regattas

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- Appendix R10 – Anti-Doping Bye-Laws
  - Additionally the definition of “crew” is added to definitions found at the end of Appendix R10:

*Crews: For the purpose of these Bye-Laws, the term “crew” or “crews” also includes teams and relay events.*
  - WADA has released a revised code this year. A revised World Rowing Anti-Doping Code based on the new WADA code will be proposed for adoption in 2027.

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- Appendix R12 World Championship Regulations & Appendix R13 World Cup Regulations
  - The Regulations now specify that rowers in mixed events shall double up
    - Spare rowers who do not compete in a medal event at that regatta are not eligible for the mixed event
    - This requirement does not apply to coxswains, or para, coastal and indoor events
    - The changes are in Appendix R12 Section 2(b) and Appendix R13 Section 5(b)
  - With the new progression based on the rankings of crews, Section 4 of R12 and Section 11 of R13 are revised to state that prizes will be awarded on the basis of the ranking of the crews.
  - Appendix R13 Section 8 is removed. This section covered a special situation under the old World Cup progressions that no longer applies for the new progression system.

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- Appendix R15 – Para-Rowing Classification Procedures
  - The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) is requiring all International Federations to adopt the standard classification code.
  - Revised Appendix R15 Para-Rowing Classification Procedures are in IPC review and will be adopted later Spring 2026.

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- Appendix R16 Masters Regatta
  - Appendix R14)14 now allows the Masters Commission to establish additional awards and prizes that maybe awarded at the World Rowing Masters Regatta.
  - The criteria for additional awards and prizes will be published in the Competition Notice.

### 14) Titles, Prizes Awards and ~~Cups~~ Trophies

Medals will be awarded to the winners of each final. The design of the medals shall be subject to the approval of the Masters Rowing Commission. The Masters Commission may establish additional awards and trophies for the World Rowing Masters Regatta. The criteria for any such additional awards shall be published in the Competition Notice.

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- Appendix R17 World Rowing Tour Regulations
  - Appendix R17:
    - Defined a World Rowing Tour
    - Provided for Eligibility to participate in a World Rowing Tour
    - Provided a process for World Rowing to select candidates for World Rowing Tours
    - Contained requirements for the Safety and Health of Rowers and Insurance
  - World Rowing is no longer directly supporting Rowing Tours
  - Appendix R17 World Rowing Tour Regulations is being deleted from the World Rowing Rules of Racing

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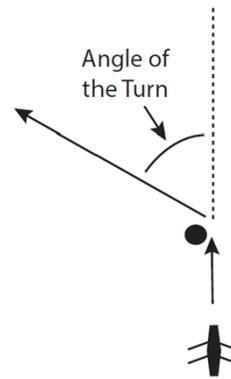
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- Coastal Rowing Rules

- Endurance

- There have been a number of collisions as boats tried to go around turning mark buoys with large turning angles
- To provide safer conditions, the following turns are considered as the greater risk must be marked with 2 buoys to “soften” the turn:
  - In the first 2km of a race where a crew is making a turn of more than 90 degrees
  - At any point in a race where a crew is making a turn of more than 105 degrees

Bye-law to Rule RCE 7 - Race Course Characteristics for International Coastal Endurance Regattas Section 1) i) and j)



### RCE 7 Race Course Characteristics

- i) If in the *first 2 km* of a race the angle of the turn at a marker requires the boat to change direction *more than 90 degrees*, the turn must be spread by the *use of a second turning marker* placed 10m to 50m from the first. In this situation crews must turn around both turning markers on the correct side.
- j) If in *any point of a race* the angle of the turn at a marker requires the boat to change direction *more than 105 degrees*, the turn must be spread by the *use of a second turning marker* placed 10m to 50m from the first. In this situation crews must turn around both turning markers on the correct side.

# *The 2026 Rules of Racing*

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- Coastal Rowing Rules – Bye-Law to RCB 4 World Rowing Beach Sprint Championships Event Programme
  - Previously the rules required one person in the Inclusion Mixed 2x to be a para athlete limited this athlete to one with a sport class of PR3-PI (Physical Impairment)
  - In 2026 this is expanded to allow para athletes with PR3-PI or PR3-VI B3 or PR3-II Group 1 sports classifications to participate in the Beach Sprint Inclusion Mixed 2x.
    - PR3-VI B3 athletes are those visually impaired athletes with the least visual impairment and limited sight.
    - PR3-II Group 1 athletes must be listed on the VIRTUS classifications in the Group 1 category.

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- Coastal Rowing Rules – Bye-Law to RCB 10 – Safety – General Principles

A Bye-Law is added to Rule RCB 10 – Safety – General Principles addressing when an athlete may have suffered a head injury.

The new Bye-Law states:

### **Head Injuries**

At World Rowing events, if the World Rowing Doctor or OC Doctor suspects that a rower has suffered a head injury, they may require that rower to undergo an immediate medical concussion assessment (Head Injury Assessment) to determine the nature and impact of that injury and whether the rower is medically fit to continue racing. If the rower is diagnosed with a concussion or the medical assessment cannot be completed within 15 minutes from the time of the injury, the crew will be subject to the normal substitution rules applying to that stage of racing. A rower diagnosed with a concussion will be required to follow the Concussion Return To Competition Protocols. Notwithstanding Rule RCB 12)3)c), the President of the Jury may delay racing if required to allow time for the medical diagnosis.

Note that the Bye-Law states:

- When the WR or OC Doctor suspect that an athlete has suffered a head injury and possible concussion the athlete must immediately undergo a medical concussion assessment
- If the a concussion is confirmed or the assessment takes longer than 15 minutes then the crew must:
  - Substitute the injured rowing for rounds before the Final Eight
  - In the rounds of the Final Eight, there are no substitutions and the crew must withdraw
- The President of the Jury may delay races to allow for assessments to be completed

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- Coastal Rowing Rules – Bye-Law to RCB 12 Beach Sprint Progressions

Changes are made to the Beach Sprint Progression System to correct errors or to change terminology to harmonize with ORIS (Olympic Results and Information System)

- Change SAB1 etc to S1
- Change Final A to Gold Medal Race (GMR instead of FA)
- Change Final B to Bronze Medal Race (BMR instead of FB)
- Change Last Eight to Final Eight
- Change Repechage to Knock Out Round (K)
- Change O1 etc to K1 etc
- 17+ - Round 3 duplicated → change the round numbers

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- Coastal Rowing Rules – Beach Sprint Bye-Laws
  - Bye-Law to Rule RCB 6 Race Course – Amended to state that in principle Lane 1 should be on the left when looking from the beach to the water.
  - Bye-Law to Rule RCB11 Duties of the Jury
    - Allows the President of the Jury to assign the functions of Starter and Judge at Start to a single person where the course set up allows such an assignment
    - Provides more clarity on the position and responsibilities of the Lane Umpires
      - Makes sure that the boats are relatively in line with the buoys and provide instructions to the crew and boat handlers if they are not
      - Notify the Race Umpire if there is a false start (a crew starts too early) or a faulty start (there was another issue requiring a new start)
    - Specify that a Turning Mark Umpire shall indicate the crews have rounded the furthest buoy but remove the requirements for this notification to be done with white and red flags.

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- Coastal Rowing Rules – Beach Sprint Bye-Laws

- Bye-Law to Rule RCB18 Boat Handlers

- The change to the RCB18 Bye-Law allows for sanctioning of boat handlers.

At a World Rowing event, a boat handler failing to comply with these Rules may be given a reprimand, a yellow card or be removed from the field of play for a period of time determined by the President of the Jury.

Remember: A Yellow Card expires at the end of a race

Note: The sanction can include removal of the boat handler from the field of play (beach) for a period of time which is determined by the President of the Jury

The penalty should be based on the severity and repeating of the violation

Because a key function of the boat handlers is safety of the crew – the removal of one boat handler for violations should not decrease the number of boat handlers for that crew

- Bye-Law to Rule RCB27 Challenges

- Specify that a crew must lodge a Challenge with the *Challenge Umpire*
- The status of a race under challenge will be changed to “Under Review” until the Challenge has been resolved.

# Questions?

If you have ideas for changes to the Rules of Racing, please contact a member of the Rules Working Group:

Kris Grudt (Chair), Cameron Allen, Eva Szanto, Jennifer Thomson, Mike Tanner, Patrick Rombaut, Prateek Gumbar

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**Thank You!**