



MAKING PROGRESS

April 2009

A Guide to the new ARA Points scheme for Event Organisers

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to explain the detailed changes to the ARA points scheme that apply from April 2009, and to provoke your thinking on how best to structure your event to take advantage of the changes. If you have any questions about the mechanics of the new scheme, or want to pursue some of the ideas for developing your event referred to in this guide, please get in touch with the National Competition Committee – either directly or through your ARA Divisional Representative.

THE CHANGES

For the past three years the National Competition Committee has been trying to address the growing problem of an imbalance in the distribution of points amongst the ARA's 13,000 registered adult competitors. Under the present scheme there are 14 levels (Novice and then 0-12 points), and yet half those competitors are Novices, and 90% have less than 5 points. We wanted simple, effective remedies, and the April 2009 changes are just that: they're easy to understand and easy to implement. It means that when you go racing, you're more likely to meet evenly matched competition, and that as you move up the points table, you'll continue to get some decent racing.

By far the simplest solution is to award more points to more winners, and so make full use of the points table. And the simplest way to achieve that is to turn most wins into qualifying wins: this change alone will double the number of points won each year at ARA regattas. So from April most non-qualifying races disappear, and if you win a pot, you'll win a point.

The new scheme will also top up the points of winners at Henley Royal Regatta and Henley Women's Regatta. This won't make a big difference to the numbers, but it will mean that Henley medallists will be placed correctly in the upper half of the points table. It may be that such topping up can be extended to other leading national events, but we decided to start with something simple and, thanks to the cooperation of the regattas involved, easy to implement.

The last piece of simplification was to tidy up the points table (see diagram) to make progression clearer at the lower end, and make a distinct difference between the lower and upper halves of the points table. From April 2009, competitors who 'win their novices' will get one point and become an Intermediate. For every two wins after that they'll move up an Intermediate category

(instead of three wins at present), and only become a Senior competitor when they're half-way up the table. Because this removes one level at the lower end of the table, every competitor will have one point added to their rowing and sculling points totals on 1st April 2009. This will be updated automatically on OARA, and will be recorded on racing licences as they're renewed after April 2009.

EFFECT ON EVENTS

Essentially there are only two things that event organisers NEED to change as a result of the new points scheme:

1. Racing categories. The existing Novice/Senior/Elite system will be replaced by new categories (Novice/Intermediate/Senior/Elite), although there will still be 6 categories as now. If you currently offer events in all 6 categories then the changes are mainly cosmetic, but if you are more selective, then you will need to decide how to map your current events onto the new scheme. You should also bear in mind that the intention of the changes is to move more people up the points table, so over the next 2-3 years we should expect to see changes in the pattern of entries, with more in the higher categories. And at a more mundane level, there are recommended abbreviations for the new categories which we ask all events to use as standard.

2. Racing licences. Because the concept of the 'qualifying event' basically disappears, you will need to punch the cards of nearly all your winning competitors. There will also be a transition phase through most of 2009 when old and new cards will be in circulation. Knowing how long it took for everyone to understand the current system, it's safe to assume that you will need to give extra support to your registration / crew marshal team, so they can cope with higher volume of cards to be punched.

This is also an opportunity for an organising committee to look at the range of events it offers, and how it structures racing. In the following pages we offer some ideas that may help you develop your event in the light of the changes to the points scheme, as well as more general changes in racing patterns and habits.

WHAT'S POSSIBLE?

All Regattas and Head Of The River races want to be:

- Well run: there's good competition, racing is safe and fair, things run to time, competitors want to come back next year
- Financially sound: the event makes some profit (perhaps for the host club), it can cope with a 'bad' year or cancellation (due to weather or a low entry) without collapsing.

But over the last decade or so, the challenges of running an event have grown tremendously. Safety and other regulation tends to mean more cost and complexity, on top of price rises for everything from tankards to toilets. At the same time, competitor habits are changing. Clubs no longer operate a predictable calendar of regular events that they attend en masse. Individual crews and coaches tend to do their own thing, and select which events to attend on fairly subjective criteria.

If your Regatta or Head suffers from any of the following symptoms, now's a good time to take a good look at how you operate:

- *Far too many of your events are straight finals with just 2 or 3 entries: the number of races you run is almost the same as the number of events you offer.*
- *You have to ring around on the day of the draw to drum up some opposition for events with just one entry – especially in higher status events – or else cancel them.*
- *You've seen a gradual reduction in your entries over the past few years: the trend is definitely downwards.*
- *You're losing entries to other events on the same weekend as yours: you seem to be dropping off the regular 'circuit' that most clubs follow – especially for higher status competitors.*

If any of these statements describes your regatta or head race, then maybe now is the time to take a good, hard look at what your event is aiming to achieve, and use the new points scheme as a vehicle to make some changes.

Here are some solutions that have worked well for a range of regattas across the country...

Streamline your categories. Some regattas offer racing in virtually every class of boat and racing category, and then wonder why they have so many straight finals and single entry events. One solution is to 'bite the bullet' and decide to focus on (for example) juniors, novices, veterans or small boats. As the distribution of points starts to re-balance over the next couple of years, you can amend your list of events offered to reflect the changing 'market'.

Do some marketing. No regatta or head race has a right to exist, and you may need to do more to encourage people to come to your event, especially if you're changing its format. Talk to a few club captains or coaches well in advance and sell the benefits of entering your event. Some regattas offer a 'victor ludorum' cash prize, but you need to make sure the additional entry brings in more income than the cost of the prize – unless you have a generous sponsor!

Do some analysis. Look at entry data for the last few years and look for patterns of popular events, and build on them. If you're getting a growth in, say, junior or small boat entries, offer more of that type of event. If you use the OARA entry system, look at the actual status points of all your competitors – you may find a different pattern than the one you get by looking at what people have entered. Use the OARA data to target the status of the events you offer.

Apply to become a primary event. This is a recognised option within the ARA Rules of Racing that allows you to offer racing outside the points scheme. It's intended to encourage junior and novice competition for people who are new to the sport, by introducing them to racing in a relatively unpressurised environment.

Introduce plate or round-robin competitions. Most competitors look for value for money from their entry fee, and don't take kindly to getting just one race in the day, even if they win a pot. So offer them another chance in a plate or runners up competition: some regattas even offer tankards for plate winners. Or run a round-robin where competitors race more than once in a sort of league table to determine the overall winner. These approaches are especially popular for junior or novice competitors, and may qualify you to become a primary event.



Introduce a wave system. Doubling up is the bane of most regatta organisers' lives, but it's just another symptom of competitors wanting value for money. So rather than fighting it, positively encourage it by dividing your race timetable into two or more 'waves', in which each event is raced to a final, and no doubling up is allowed within a wave. For example you could run three waves with quads, then doubles, then singles for a particular status in consecutive waves.

Competitors can be sure of getting more than one race in a fairly predictable timetable, and the organisers don't have to burn the midnight oil trying to accommodate all the doubling up combinations.

RACING LICENCES

Licences will be re-issued at their normal renewal date over the next year: new licences are printed in red, making them easy to distinguish from the old, blue ones. Red licences will show the additional rowing and sculling point added for all competitors on 1st April 2009, whilst the blue ones will of course be one point short.

When you punch the racing licence for a winning competitor nothing has changed, you simply add one point to the total shown on their card in the relevant discipline (rowing or sculling). Don't try to correct an old blue card to show the new, post 1st April points.

Everyone who sees a blue card should simply *mentally* add one point. The new red licence will of course show the correct totals.

OARA records will show the correct points totals, updated with the 1st April changes.

The table below compares the old and new points and status tables.

Old Scheme	2008 Points	2009 Points	New Scheme
Novice	-	0	Novice (NOV)
Senior 4	0	1	Intermediate 3 (IM3)
Senior 3	1	2	
Senior 2	2	3	Intermediate 2 (IM2)
	3	4	
Senior 1	4	5	Intermediate 1 (IM1)
	5	6	
	6	7	
Elite	7	8	Senior (SEN)
	8	9	
	9	10	
Elite	10	11	Elite (ELI)
	11	12	
	12	12	
	12	12	

EVENT ABBREVIATIONS

The following standard set of abbreviations should be used to describe the status of each event at a Regatta or Head of the River Race. These are consistent with those used on OARA: the only change from established practice is the use of 3 letter codes for the Level.

CLASS		LEVEL		QUALIFIER		BOAT TYPE		DISCIPLINE	
O	Open	NOV	Novice	Lwt	Lightweight	8		x	Sculling
W	Women	IM1	Intermediate 1	Mxd	Mixed	4		+	Coxed
		IM2	Intermediate 2	U23	Under 23	2		-	coxless
		IM3	Intermediate 3			1			
		SEN	Senior						
		ELI	Elite						
V	Veteran		A, B, C, etc						
J	Junior		17, 16, 15, etc	Mai	A or B Maiden				
				S/J	School/Junior				

Examples:

O NOV 4+	Open Novice coxed fours
W SEN 2x	Women's Senior doubles (coxless)
O U23 4x	Open under 23 quads (coxless)
O ELI U23 1x	Open Elite under 23 single sculls
O Lwt 2-	Open Lightweight pairs (coxless)
W J14A 4x+	Women's Junior under 14 A coxed quads
O J15B 8x+	Open Junior under 15B coxed octuples
V A NOV 8+	Veteran A Novice eights

POINTS TOP UP FOR INTERNATIONALS AND FOR HENLEY WINNERS

The ARA Rules of Racing already provide for automatic topping up of points for international winners, and that scheme is now amended to cover athletes who compete for ANY nation, not just for Great Britain. So, from 1st April 2009:

If you compete at the...	your points are topped up to...
Olympic Regatta or World Rowing Championships	12 rowing points AND 12 sculling points
World Under 23 Championships	12 points for the discipline* in which you competed
World Junior Championships	6 points for the discipline* in which you competed

* i.e. rowing or sculling

The topping up principle is also extended to winners at Henley Royal Regatta and Henley Women's Regatta from 2009 onwards.

Henley Royal Regatta

Points in the relevant discipline are topped up as follows

Open events	12
Intermediate events	10
Club / Student events	9
Junior events	6

Specifically that means:

Event	Points top up
Grand Challenge Cup	12 rowing
Ladies' Challenge Plate	10 rowing
Thames Challenge Cup	9 rowing
Temple Challenge Cup	9 rowing
Princess Elizabeth Challenge Cup	6 rowing
Remenham Challenge Cup	12 rowing
Stewards' Challenge Cup	12 rowing
Queen Mother Challenge Cup	12 sculling
Princess Grace Challenge Cup	12 sculling
Prince of Wales Challenge Cup	10 sculling
Visitors' Challenge Cup	10 rowing
Wyfold Challenge Cup	9 rowing
Britannia Challenge Cup	9 rowing
Prince Albert Challenge Cup	9 rowing
Fawley Challenge Cup	6 sculling
Silver Goblets and Nickalls' Challenge Cup	12 rowing
Double Sculls Challenge Cup	12 sculling
Diamond Challenge Sculls	12 sculling
Princess Royal Challenge Cup	12 sculling

Henley Women's Regatta

Points in the relevant discipline are topped up as follows:

Elite events	9
Senior events	7
Intermediate events	5
School / Junior events	3

The Event Organisers' Guide is available as a download from www.ara-rowing.org/rulechanges09