



NOT THE NATIONAL LEAGUE

V2 – June 2023

INTRODUCTION

As part of the BDA's strategy to grow the sport we have consulted on proposed changes to the National League. Our research has shown that on average a paddler attends three races in a season, ie roughly one in three races that are run. For a club to attend all races with one crew they therefore need a membership of roughly three times the number of people in each race, ie 66 (includes helms and drummers).

Of the 28 clubs currently registered only 4 clubs have more than 60 members. The average is 37. The sport has roughly the same number of clubs as 20 years ago albeit they have changed over time.

The leap for a new club to National League racing club is big, they will typically start out with around 15-20 members and may never get to 66 members. To run a race programme that caters to these bigger clubs overlooks the potential within smaller clubs to get involved in the sport. We know there are numerous pockets of dragon boat racing around the country in which the BDA is not involved. We need to bridge this disconnect between current league clubs and new starter clubs, opening the sport to other groups such as BCS, ACS, Para-dragons which is difficult to do with our current racing format.

In addition, we need to acknowledge that the sport is going to take time to recover from Covid. Membership numbers have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels and on-going increases in the cost of living will inevitably decrease members' ability to travel long distances.

We have consulted with clubs on a proposal that we believe will go some way to addressing the issues identifies above and are now in a position to move towards a new three-tiered approach to racing as set out below.

THE PROPOSAL



The BDA Exec will continue to manage the national and regional events in a similar way to the old league format and will provide officials for these events.

The new club format will open up the opportunity for clubs to provide smaller events that are more flexible in format and can run for any number of clubs. It will be up to the clubs to decide how and who they invite to their own events and they will be responsible for deciding which classes, distances or fun events they want to include.

The results from these events will be included in a new ranking system which is set out in Appendix 3. Existing events such as the Henley Winter Series and Northern Winter Series or overseas events (Club Crews, Euro Cup or events such as Barcelona) can also be accommodated within the ranking system. Events can be held throughout the year.

NATIONAL RANKING COMPETITION CLASSES

Initially, we propose to run the following classes at national and regional events. Clubs may define their own classes at their own events, but if entered into the National Ranking Competition they must also comply with the following class rules.

Women's Class

Women's class rules are the same as for the IDBF women's class. *Reminder:* The helm and drummer must be female.

Mixed Class

A mixed crew must comprise a maximum of 10 men. Note that this is a change to allow clubs with more than 10 women in the team to enter the mixed rather than the open class. If there are more than two clubs with a full women's team in the event then those teams will qualify for points in the women's ranking competition.

Open Class

A class that may have any mix of genders as paddlers, helms or drummers.

At club events we are open to more classes being added in accordance with demand. Please get in contact if you are interested in co-ordinating a ranking competition in other classes. This could include the following

- Breast cancer crews
- All cancer crews
- Para-dragons

At national and regional events the number of each paddlers in each class will be defined by the event organisers. At club events the number of paddlers in each class is up to the clubs organising or taking part in the event.

Appendix 1 sets out how the ranking system will work.

Appendix 2 to this document sets out some ideas for events that clubs might want to consider.

Appendix 3 sets out some practical considerations clubs should think about when putting on an event.

APPENDIX ONE – THE RANKING SYSTEM

As part of the review of the National League it is clear that if we are to include club events we need a new scoring system. If we continued to use the existing points based system (or any variant of it) then the inclusion of club events would result in a heavy bias towards those that raced the most rather than those that were the best.

We have considered lots of options and looked across many different sports to come up with a system that we think is worth trialling and could provide a way of scoring that allows smaller clubs to be included, reduces the need to travel and will allow growth of the sport from the grass roots level up.

We will not get this right first time so your patience is appreciated. We will keep it under constant review and Congress will be the forum for clubs to provide feedback.

The ELO Model

Elo modelling is a commonly-used approach towards creating ranking systems in sport originally derived for chess. It is used across multiple sports at international level including golf, tennis and snow-boarding. The principle is that points are awarded for each event based on your previous ranking and the difference between you and the teams you beat.

- If a lower ranked team (A) beats a higher ranked team (B), team A is rewarded a lot because they were expected to lose, but won. Likewise, team B loses points because they were expected to win, but lost.
- If a lower ranked team (A) loses to a higher ranked team (B), team A loses less points because they were expected to lose and lost. Team B should not be rewarded much because they were expected to win and won.

This prevents higher ranking teams continually racing lower ranking teams just to gain 'easy' points.

The main purpose of this is to rank the teams from highest to lowest performing and not to award points, however to get a ranking points are calculated in accordance with the following equations.

Most people can stop reading now! For the mathematically minded here is the detail

R_W = Elo rating of winning boat, R_L = Elo rating of losing boat,

$$E_W = \text{Expected points of boat 1} = \frac{1}{1+10^{(R_L-R_W)/400}}$$

$$E_L = \text{Expected points of losing} = \frac{1}{1+10^{(R_W-R_L)/400}} \quad \text{and}$$

K (The k factor), also referred to as the rate of change, a parameter defined for each event.

The winning boat's new rating calculated as:

$$R_W + K*(1 - E_W)$$

The losing boat's new rating is calculated as:

$$R_L + K*(0 - E_L)$$

For multiple boats in an event we are implementing a multi-elo model. We are using initial parameters of $k = 32$ and $d = 400$ based on initial running of the 2019 models. If anyone has any expertise in this area we would love to hear from you.

The ranking competition will 'roll-over' from year to year. An award will be made at the National Championships each year to the top places in each class and the overall cup competition. Clubs will be eligible

for an award in each class if they have entered three or more events in the same class during the calendar year running up to the National Championships.

APPENDIX TWO – EVENT IDEAS FOR CLUBS

Side-by-side straight line races over known distances. Typical distances for dragon boat races in this format would be

- 200m
- 500m
- 1000m

Considerations for this type of racing would be

- Ability to time events which requires communication from start to finish and space on nearby banks with clear sight of start and finish lines.
- Lanes need to be equal in length and depth, so ideally racing needs to be between parallel banks in areas of water greater than 3m depth
- If starting races on rivers with flow the ability to hold the boat stationary will be required.
- Ideally a race format should not rely on timing, but on head to head results, possibly over several rounds
- This type of racing is suitable for training up novice helms

Pursuit type races over long or short distances either with or without turns. Here the boats are set off at timed intervals and results are based on times over the finish line. Considerations for this type of racing would be

- If turns are used timing of the event can be done from one location by the same people
- Setting up a video camera on start and finish lines is recommended as this can be used for results if manual timing fails.
- Turns on the course should generally be to the left; right hand turns can be used, but be aware that most helms will not be familiar with this.
- Adjusting the interval between the boats at the start can be used to control whether overtaking is likely to happen or not

Slalom races

- Similar to those in Liverpool, around fixed points such as buoys

Point to point races

Can be used where there is access to a lake or ability to cross a river and used to increase the length of courses in small areas of water. Set a series of points to be visited with a clear point that must be crossed by the drummer or helm. Set boats off at intervals and time start to finish for each boat. This could include sections of backward or sideways paddling or manoeuvring the boat as well.

Fun Activities

- Tug of war
- Mixed disciplines, eg run, paddle, run

Events can be run in either big or small boats with any agreed number of paddlers in the boat

APPENDIX THREE – LOGISTICS CONSIDERATIONS

There are lots of logistics to be considered when running an event. Most clubs already have experience of running events so are aware of these. If you are running an event for the first time consider talking to other local clubs to understand the logistics.

Things you will need to consider include

Format and Purpose of the Event

- What is the purpose of the event?
- What type of racing do you want to do?
- How many boats and people will be involved?
- What experience, age and ability are your participants?
- When are you planning the event, what other events might be happening at that time?
- If you are including juniors or vulnerable adults ensure you have safeguarding measures in place

Off-water Facilities

- Access to toilets and changing rooms
- Availability of clean drinking water
- Car and boat parking
- Ability to safely offload boats into the water

Race Course and Boats

- Suitability of the race course for your proposed race programme
- Access for spectators and race officials
- Start and finish line clearly visible to helms and officials
- Appropriate safety cover for the course
- Provision of racing boats (either host clubs own or visiting clubs bring their own)
- Any licenses you might require for the water or facilities

Race Officials

- Appoint a 'chief official' to oversee running of the event
- Share officials' duties among participating clubs
- Provide video where possible on finish lines
- You will need someone to co-ordinate and manage the results

Safety

- Make sure you have a risk assessment and site management plan
- Consider whether you need support boats and qualified drivers
- Ensure helms are confident with the water and weather conditions
- Ensure you have a safety officer and first aider appointed for the event
- Consider if you need disclaimers, awareness of risk and fitness to participate forms?

Costs

- Produce a budget and ensure you have considered costs for
 - Hire of facilities, boats and/or water

- Catering or supply of food and drink
- Insurance via the BDA if including non-BDA registered crews
- Waterway licenses and support boats
- Communicate any costs to the participating clubs and members

Communications

If you want the BDA to promote your event please advise us 6-8 weeks ahead of the event. Similarly if you want us to send out an invitation to other clubs make sure that you let us know a couple of weeks ahead of when you want the invitation issued.

If your venue/stretch of water is shared, let the other local user groups know about your event to avoid clashes, and send a reminder a few days before.

There are many ways to promote your event, for example

- direct to participants
- local press, radio
- social media – remember to tag the BDA, so they can share it
- eg Eventbrite
- fliers, posters
- local council
- health/wellbeing groups
- sports clubs

Equipment

Things you might need

- Buoyancy aids
- Paddles
- Prizes
- Walkie talkies
- Stopwatches
- Megaphone
- Camera or iPad
- Clipboards
- First aid kit

After the Event

If you are running a competition that will count for the National Ranking Competition send in the results.

Elicit feedback from participants and staff to review the event. This might also be an opportunity to get quotes, pictures or video testimonials for future marketing, and post on social media.

Share pictures to the BDA social media feeds.

Revisions to this document

V2 (this version) – competition rules have been removed and placed in a separate document