AVON BLUEFRIARS SMALL BOATS HEAD 2026

SAFETY AND RACING INSTRUCTIONS

PLEASE ENSURE THAT ALL CREWS ARE AWARE OF AND FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS

1	**COMPETITORS – All entrants in the Avon Bluefriars Small Boats Head should:**
	• be aware that they enter the Head at their own risk. • ensure that they are fully insured against that risk. • be competent rowers and competent swimmers and aware that the advice of British Rowing is that capsize drills should have been done. • be satisfied that they are sufficiently fit and competent to participate safely in the Head in the conditions as they find them on the day.
2	**BOATS:** It is the responsibility of the competitors and their clubs to ensure that their boats are safe and are prepared to the standards required by the RowSafe and are suitable for the crew and conditions in which they are to be used. Crews should check their boats prior to going to the launching rafts. Control Commission may undertake spot check inspections of the boats and may ask the competitors to perform the checks themselves under supervision. They will exclude any boat that fails to meet the standard laid down until they are put right by the competitor to the satisfaction of the Commission.
3	**COXES AND STEERSPEOPLE:** They must be competent at steering the boat they are in charge of in racing conditions. They must understand orders from race officials. Specifically, they must be able to manoeuvre the boat during marshalling, turn the boat for racing, know which is port and starboard, know how to hold the boat quickly and be able to take charge of the crew during an incident or emergency. All coxes and steerspeople must familiarise themselves with the overtaking rules in force for the race. They must be able to read a car number plate from distance of 20 metres. Ideally the eyesight of the bow pair should also be at this standard. See Point 8 – Information for Coxes and Steerspeople. **Please watch the steering video on the Avon County website before you come to the race.**
4	**COXES** are reminded that they should comply with the minimum weight requirements for each crew they cox. These exclude the cox box which is part of the boat and are: **45kg for all J15 and younger crews** **55kg for all other crews** To make up this weight a lighter cox shall carry dead weight and coxes should bring their own dead weights. Coxes will be weighed at the event.
5	**RIVER CONDITIONS:** We will monitor the state of river and the forecasts throughout the week prior to the race and will report them on our web site.
6	**PERMANENT HAZARDS**: There are two bridges with concrete supports in the middle of the river - one HALFWAY along the course (BOTTOM BRIDGE) and the other (TOP BRIDGE) just above the start. The Bottom Bridge is difficult to navigate during racing - coxes and steerspeople should be very careful with the course they take through this bridge - please read Section 24. There are boats moored at various places along the bank. There are some low-hanging trees. See navigation instructions below.
7	**POSSIBLE HAZARDS:** There are overhanging trees all along the course – some reach down to river level. There may also be branches and tree stumps in the water.

8	**INFORMATION FOR COXES AND STEERSPEOPLE:** The course is inspected before the race; any hazards additional to those listed above will be posted on notice boards in Registration. Clubs launching from Minerva must send a representative to the ACRC clubhouse to register. The race committee may decide to prevent some or all crews launching if river conditions are difficult. Please respect their decision.
9	**CREWS BASED AT MINERVA** may launch from their slipway but may have their boats checked before launching and must remain upstream of the bottom bridge.
10	**CREWS** must wear uniform racing kit above the waist and must be appropriately dressed for the conditions.
11	**BOATS ON TRESTLES:** All boats and blades when not being used for racing should be kept on trestles in the Boat Field on the river side of the railway just upstream of the boathouse. All blades must be removed from or near rafts and may be stored on the A-frames provided. ACRC and its members are not liable for any injury or damage resulting from use of these frames.
12	**LAUNCHING:** is at the time stated on the timetable. Please ensure that your trailer arrives in time for you to assemble your boats and launch at the times stated. Some clubs will launch from "Minerva" and need to be in position at the appropriate time. If your launch raft is "Avon" please use the FIVE rafts in front of the Avon County and Bristol University boathouses. Higher numbered crews should launch first and should marshal right up by the sluice beyond the top bridge. Bring your boats down stern first and observe the land circulation pattern which forms part of these instructions. All boats should approach the river from between the boathouses. Quads and fours will launch from the 3 downstream rafts and singles and doubles will launch from the 2 upstream rafts unless directed otherwise by the marshals. You are strongly advised not to wear Wellingtons on the rafts. Shoes etc may be stored in the numbered bags provided which will be returned to the rafts when crews return. NB Keep the tunnel under the railway clear at all times for emergency access.
13	Please launch as quickly as possible to help the race proceed to time. Late launching will not be allowed if it is likely to delay the start of a division. Where appropriate, crews prevented from launching late in one division may be allowed to race in the next division. The organising committee reserves the right to apply time penalties for late boating.
14	**SAFETY BOATS:** Two will be on the water whilst crews are proceeding to the start. During racing they will be based at appropriate positions along the course. They will follow the last long division crews to the finish. A further safety boat will be stationed above the bottom bridge while short course crews are marshalling; this boat will act as a safety boat during the long course race. There will also be boats to marshal crews at the start and finish. Please be aware that a safety boat might pass you at very high speed if it is attending an incident or carrying a casualty.

	INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SHORT COURSE
15	**PROCEEDING TO THE START:** Keep to the starboard/right hand side (ACRC Bank). Go through the starboard/right hand arch of the BOTTOM bridge and then cross over onto the port/left hand (Minerva bank).
16	**MARSHALLING: CREWS ROWING IN THE SHORTER RACES** will be marshalled just above the BOTTOM bridge. Please get into racing order with bows facing upstream on the Minerva side of the river. You will be told when to turn around and proceed to the start. Crews arriving late at the start may have to wait until other crews have raced and may incur a time penalty. The short course will be started as soon as all other crews have passed,
17	Before **THE SHORT START,** crews will be instructed to turn and paddle through the port/left side (ACRC bank) arch of the bottom bridge. Watch out for debris caught on the bridge. Crews should build up pace as soon as they are clear of the bridge. The start is about 20-30 metres below the bridge.
18	**RACING** crews must row on the **STARBOARD/RIGHT (**Minerva bank) side of the river, **overtaking** on the **PORT/LEFT** (Avon bank). Slower crews must give way to faster crews. Time penalties may be awarded for unsafe behaviour.
19	**DISEMBARKING:** After the finish crews must continue to paddle light. Crews must go beyond the rafts before turning and approach them upstream. Please wait patiently in the queue for your turn. Do not go too far past the rafts as there is a weir further downstream. Crews returning to Minerva must wait, facing upstream, on the ACRC side downstream of the rafts until given permission to proceed.
	INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE LONG COURSE
20	**PROCEEDING TO THE START:** Keep to the starboard/right hand side (ACRC Bank). Go through the starboard/right hand arch of both bridges. Look out for less experienced crews and other river users coming downstream. Less experienced crews will be racing a shorter course assembling above the bottom bridge on the Minerva bank. All other crews are asked to launch promptly and should look out for the inexperienced crews as they pass. Long course crews should get themselves above the bottom bridge, and above short crews who are marshalling, as quickly as possible. The short course will be started as soon as all other crews have passed, and the long course soon after all crews have started from the short start.
21	**AT THE LONG START** crews should marshal above the TOP bridge facing upstream on the starboard/right hand side (ACRC bank) until told to turn.
22	Before **THE LONG START** crews will be instructed to turn and paddle through the **starboard/right** (Minerva bank) arch of the top bridge. Watch out for debris caught on the bridge. Crews should build up pace as soon as they are clear of the bridge. The start is about 20-30 metres below the bridge.
23	**RACING** crews must row on the **STARBOARD/RIGHT (**Minerva bank) side of the river, **overtaking** on the **PORT/LEFT** (Avon bank). Slower crews must give way to faster crews. Time penalties may be awarded for unsafe behaviour.
24	From the Bottom Bridge to 300m upstream is designated as a special control zone. An umpire will be stationed at this point and will control any overtaking activity as he/she sees appropriate. **THE RACING LINE** at the BOTTOM bridge is through the port/left (Avon) arch of the bridge. Crews should take this line about 100m upstream of the bridge and there will be monitors to direct you if you do not appear to be on course or there is an overtaking situation.

	You must follow their instructions. Please also be aware that for safety reasons, any crew which is completely on the wrong line, or close to another crew whether overtaking or being overtaken, might be directed to race through the right-hand arch. Crews may also be instructed by the umpire not to overtake (i.e. slow down) until clear of the bridge. **This instruction will be for safety reasons and must be obeyed.**
25	After the bottom bridge, **the racing line** is again down the right hand side; overtake on the left.
26	**DISEMBARKING:** After the finish crews must continue to paddle light. Crews must go beyond the rafts before turning and approach them upstream. Please wait patiently in the queue for your turn. Do not go too far past the rafts as there is a weir further downstream. Crews returning to Minerva must wait, facing upstream, on the ACRC side downstream of the rafts until given permission to proceed.
27	Details of these **SAFETY** arrangements are on our web site and in the programme. The race monitors can see the whole course and each division is followed by safety launches. **If you fall in it is usually the safest option to stay with your boat and follow the instructions you have learnt in your capsize drills. Help will be on its way very quickly.**
28	**STOPPING THE RACE:** If monitors have to stop the race, they will blow a whistle and wave a red flag and/or instruct crews to STOP. All crews must stop rowing and remain where they are until given further instructions by the race monitors.
29	**COACHING FROM THE BANK** will be allowed. It is possible to cycle along the tow path although it is likely to be very muddy and there are a couple of gates, but it should be possible to cycle to the short course marshalling area and follow a short course boat. Please respect members of the public who may be using the towpath.
30	**THE RACE COMMITTEE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO DISQUALIFY OR IMPOSE A TIME PENALTY ON ANY CREW DISOBEYING INSTRUCTIONS OR CAUSING INTERFERENCE TO OR FOULING ANY RACING CREW.**
31	**THE RACE COMMITTEE** will adjudicate all penalties. It may, after consultation, determine the finishing order of crews.
32	Your shoes will be brought to you in their numbered bags. After disembarking move your boat and blades away from the rafts and riverbank as soon as possible. In between divisions, boats and blades may be left on trestles in the field on the river side of the railway bridge. This will be signposted. No cars will be allowed in this field. **Your Empacher numbers may be collected when you disembark – if not please return them to Registration. A charge of £5 each may be made for numbers damaged or not returned.**
33	Be aware of the possibility of **Weil's disease**. Wash your hands and if you get flu-like symptoms see a doctor. See the club website for further advice.
34	**The River Avon water quality is poor**. Good hygiene practice should be maintained:, • Cover cuts, grazes and blisters with waterproof plasters • Do not swallow river water • Wash your hands after rowing, especially before eating (antiseptic handwash will be provided at the catering facility) • Keep your water bottles away from contaminated surfaces including water in the bottom of the boat. Ensure the bottle has a closed top • Always wear footwear when on the bank or pontoons • Clean down all equipment when back on land • If you fall into the river, the race officials will ask you take a shower immediately - you are strongly advised to do this

35	**Biosecurity**: There is a need to minimise transfer of harmful or alien species between waterways. Please wash boats and other equipment before coming to the event, and wash them again before use back at home. Buckets of water will be provided