

Wild Water Racing; how it Works

From September 1st 2012, Wild Water Racing will become more fun, more competitive and easier to take part in.

The structures are being simplified and improved to make the sport accessible and affordable. There will be one ranking list, which will be updated after every event enabling paddlers to watch their progress throughout the season.

The Structure

This will be based on a number of Regional and National events, with one ranking list and the National Champion being declared as the person who wins the British Open Championship Race in each class.

The Season

The Wild Water Racing season will run from September 1st each year till August 31st the following year. For age related competitions, the cut of date will be 31st December in the middle of the season. So for example if some is 17 on the 31st December, then they will be classified as an under 18 for the whole season or Junior 18. For Masters the same date will be used so to be counted as a Master you need to be 35 or over on 31st December.

Reasoning

A season running from September to August, enables elite athletes to prepare for international events through a training cycle which enables them to take a full part in the British Championships that supports both International and Domestic Competitions.

The Season will be open to newcomers to join the ranking system at anytime throughout the year and as they progress, they will be able to select events that meet their training needs and to start preparing for national and ultimately international competitions.

Regional Events

There will be a series of local competitions in each region of the British Canoe Union each season, these will be Regional Events. Each Region will have a regional champion in each age group each season. However, there will be no residential qualification to enter a regional event; they will be open to anybody, so in theory the same person could win every region in a season.

At each regional event paddlers will be allocated MS points (the system currently used in Division A), these will be used to create both the national ranking and the ranking list for the local region in which that event took place.

Each Region should have a champion in each class and age group. And maybe a regional club champion, based on the total number of points each club gets.

Regional events should be a mix of classic and sprint events, with the recommendation that sprint events should be held in the warmer months, as having youngsters hanging about in wet canoeing kit waiting for their second run is not advantageous, and if they get changed it is often difficult to persuade them they want to get back on.

Reasoning

Cost of travelling to events is a barrier to both entry and to continuing to participate, many people enter just one local event, by having a series of local events, we should increase participation on a more regular basis, once people are taking part in events regularly and can see themselves moving up the ranking list they may become interested in trying other events further afield.

A local ranking list and championship will also help to build the sport in local clubs, which is what is required to build the sport nationally, giving a regional club trophy will help to support this.

National Events

There will be five national ranking events each season, in each of the Sprint and Classic format. At each event double MS points will be awarded.

The five events should be, but not in this order:

The British Open; the winners of these events will be declared the national champions in each category.

The English Open - This must take place in England

The Scottish Open – Somewhere in Scotland

The Welsh Open – In Wales

Another Event – This will take place at the direction of the WWR Executive and does not necessarily have to be on mainland Britain.

Other events with “national appeal” can be staged, but for ranking purposes they will either be regional events or outside of the ranking system. Other events may include; age group championships, Masters, Youth, an inter-club championship, etc. These could also count as regional races for the nominated region.

At an appropriate juncture the Committee may wish to consider re-introducing the national team championship.

Selection events for International races should where possible be one of the National Ranking Events, but may be specially convened races at the direction of the WWR Executive if that is what is required to best serve the interest of the sport. If this does occur, then the entry rules for the selection race will be the same as for National Events.

At an appropriate juncture of development, the Executive should consider introducing an award for the to club, maybe even host an inter-club championship.

Qualification for National Events

To enter a nation event or a selection event, a paddler must have raced in at least three regional events in the current season, (if the national event takes place before January 1st 3 regional events in the current calendar year will suffice) and have reached the minimum standards set by the WWR Executive Committee for that race (technical competency). As the sport develops and numbers increase the Executive may introduce a ranking standard for entry (i.e. you must be ranked in the top 100 to qualify or even better, must have more than so many MS points).

In order to make the transition to the new system, all currently ranked (i.e. have raced this season (1012) in a ranking race) Division A paddlers will be able to enter any national events before January 1st 2013.

At the organiser's discretion, it will be possible to run Open events alongside National Events, but the paddlers in Open events will not get MS points or be able to be considered for selection to either Senior or Junior British Teams. Any paddlers entering an Open event must still meet the competency requirements.

Ideally the Calendar should be designed to have regional events predominantly in the early part of the season, with the national events taking part in the later part of the season. Given the nature of access and water levels in GB, this may not always be possible.

Reasoning

The competency is to ensure our races are safe. The suggestion is the adoption of a self assessment system similar to that used on the Thameside Races.

Qualification by entering races, this is to ensure that people who want to race at national events are showing a commitment to the sport and are supporting local clubs and local events. As the sport grows, the ranking qualification will also increase participation as people need to ensure they qualify.

The titled events are to ensure a geographical spread of events each year.

Declaring the British Open Champion as the British Champion rather than the person who comes top of the ranking list, is to align the sport with International events, where the World Champion is the person who wins a one off event. If the calendar is managed properly our best paddlers should be battling it out at one event to be crowned Britain's number 1, whilst still being on course to challenge for international titles. There may be a wish also to recognise the top ranked paddler each season.

The fifth event being in the power of the Executive provides the freedom to meet the sports needs for year to year.

Five national events are enough to make them valid competitions without diluting the numbers of people taking part. There is a huge cost involved for a lot of people to travel to national events, fuel, accommodation etc.

Hosting other events that are not national ranking events, allows good racing waters to be used for prestigious events in years when they are not ranking national events. These races should be moved around the GB.

Ranking System

A national ranking system which lists each individual paddler in Great Britain should be maintained and updated after each race.

There also needs to be a ranking list for each region, which essentially does the same thing on a regional basis. This is based on the regional competition structure and not the residence of the paddlers.

The MS system provides the simplest and probably the fairest way of doing this as it measures each participants performance in relation to the person who won the race.

National Lists

There should be a national list for each class in both Classic and Sprint. The results used should be the paddlers best 3 performances in the season added together.

At national events double MS points will be awarded.

At events that are not quorate; i.e., have less than three boats racing, then for ranking purposes, the handicap advantage system can be used to compare them against another class that is quorate (please note these results should not affect the quorate class, the paddlers modified results should be inserted to get the MS points and then removed before publication).

The National Ranking list should be updated as often as possible, preferably after each event (but we have to be mindful of the fact we are asking volunteers to do this and it may not always be possible). The list should be published on the WWR website, should include the paddlers name, club and best three results as well as their total and their ranking position. (Realistically it may not be possible to display all their results as hopefully there will be quite a few regional events to include.)

At the end of the season and at times appropriate during the season (maybe after each National event), it would be good to extricate the age group lists, which would simply be taken from their position on the national list, so the top ranked under 18 would be top of the under 18 list.

Suggested age groups should be:

Seniors, under 23, under 18, under 16, under 14, under 12, under 10 and if required under 8. Masters should initially be over 35, although if numbers permit, over 45, over 55, over 65 etc

Regional Lists

There should be a list maintained for each region, all though this may require getting more volunteers in the regions or a person to undertake all the regional lists.

For the regional list there will be no differentiation between Classic and Sprint, there will be just one list per region for each class, but the same rules would apply.

Reasoning

The adoption of the MS system is the easiest way to rank paddlers on performance. Ideally it would be good to have a multiplier variable for each event according to the technical difficulty; however this would introduce complications and controversy; Who would judge the technical difficulty, water conditions change from year to year, meaning some events are easier than others on the same stretch of river.

Awarding double MS points at national events, means that people who take part in National events will be higher up the ranking list than those who don't, but it gives one ranking list one point of reference, which can be used for paddlers, clubs and coaches applying for support. It also shows how successful we have been at growing the sport, the longer the list the better we are doing!

The reason for not separating classic and sprint out at regional levels is to try and simplify the system and to help grow the sport at entry level. If it is easier to actually just extricate the results from the national lists then this could be done as an alternative.

The complexion of non-quorate events, is a problem, but using the handicap advantage does seem to be the only realistic way to resolve the issue, until that is of course we are so successful that we never have inquorate events.

This system is easy to administrate, fair and transparent.

An alternative option would be to have a rolling ranking list which measures the best 3 performances in the past 12 months.

Event Organisation

The simplification of races made for 2012 by removing the handicap advantages for Wavehoppers etc, has meant it is a lot easier for people to organise events, basically all that is now needed is four synchronized stop watches, people to staff the start and finish, pens and paper to do the simple calculation to work out the elapsed time (far easier than trying to get a computer to work in the middle of a field, when it is raining!).

We do not want to lose this simplicity, because it is key to increasing event numbers. Each Organiser needs to receive an electronic package to help them run the event, most of which is already available online:

Instructions on the format (don't assume any prior knowledge as this will always cause somebody to miss something)

Entry Cards

Pro forma returns for entry fee accounts; and results. The results spread sheet needs to include the formula for working out the ranking points (this is in fact already available, just needs to be modified for the new system).

Time recording sheets, simple word document.

Notices; including photographic policy; emergency contact details, First aider notice, assumed risk notice, etc.