

GET RACING

A quick guide to everything you need to know to take part in your first marathon or sprint race.

BSCC attends two types of competition event – sprints (short races), and marathons (long races).

Most of the races are held on Sundays – race dates can be found on the website (Events > Club Calendar) and on the Club Activities List (circulated by email, downloadable from the Club Calendar page, and on display in the clubhouse).

The first section below outlines the different types of races we do. The second section describes what you need to do to get involved.

1. THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF RACE

Paddlers usually begin by taking part in our internal Time Trials and **local sprint regattas** and then moving on to marathon races as their confidence increases. There are two series of marathons – the **Hasler series marathons** (during the summer) and the **Winter Series marathons** (during the winter). The most committed paddlers go on to take part in the **National Sprints** held at Nottingham.

a. Local Regattas

These take place during the summer and are open to all even the youngest juniors and newest of novices can take part. The arrangements for these vary from venue to venue – you will need to read the details for the event to find out more.

As a general rule though, you can expect the event to go on for most of the day, and involve a large number of very short races, mostly in singles boats. Racing will take place in small groups of (typically) four paddlers of roughly equal ability.



Towards the end of the day there may be some crew racing (K2, K4s), or relays, often just for fun.

The day will end with a prizegiving at which medals will be presented, usually organised into age/sex classes.

b. Hasler & Geoff Sanders Marathon Races

The Hasler series is organised by on a regional basis – Stortford is in the Eastern Region. The races take place from spring to early autumn.

Paddlers (aged 14+ on the 1st January) are ranked by past performance into nine divisions. New paddlers start in Division 9 and are promoted/demoted as necessary following each race. Typical distances are 4 miles (Div 7-9), 8 miles (Div 4-6) and 12 miles (Div 1-3), and courses may involve one or more portages.



Most paddlers use racing kayaks, though a few use high-kneeler or racing canoes. There are separate races for singles and doubles, arranged by division. There is no distinction between kayaks and canoes, or between men and women.

As well as individual trophies for race winners, points are awarded to each paddler within each race and the best scores are added to give the overall score for the club. The placings at each event in the series determine the club's position in the Eastern Region Hasler league. Only the top few clubs from the region qualify to go to the national final in the autumn.

Taking place alongside the Hasler marathons are the **Geoff Sanders (GS) races** – a separate series of shorter races for under 14s (typically 2 miles, no portages). Age is determined on 1st January. There are three divisions: GS-A, GS-B and GS-C, based on performance, with GS-A being the fastest. Only under-12s can enter GS-B and GS-C. There are promotions based on performance, even into Div 9 for best u14s.



As the GS races are relatively short, there may also be an optional K2 race included in the GS seat fee for those youngsters who would like to do it.

Venues – The venues for Hasler/GS races in our region are Chelmsford, Cambridge, Bedford, Norwich, Leighton Buzzard, and Bishop's Stortford. Sometimes we send teams to out-of-region races too.

Costs – Race fees are set by the organiser and vary from race to race. In 2025, seat fees in our region were typically £12 for seniors, £10 for juniors and £3-£6 for Geoff Sanders. BSCC members can race using their automatic Club Associate Paddle UK membership until they reach a high standard (Div 6+).

Entries - Not all races can be entered on the day, and when this is possible there will usually be an extra "late entry fee" of £5+). Once the club has entered you, the Organisers will probably charge for the seat whether you attend or not, and if this happens the cost will be passed on to you. It is therefore particularly important to make sure the club is quite clear about whether you are taking part, or not, before the main entry deadline.

c. Winter Series Marathons

From November to March, BSCC participates in the Winter Series. Instead of ability divisions, paddlers race in classes based on age (at the start of the series), sex and type of boat. As well as racing kayaks, there are classes specifically for canoes and GPs (General Purpose boats). Distances vary from 3 to 9 miles.



Competitors can win medals for individual performances at each race, and also score points for themselves and for the club. Points accumulate across the series towards class trophies, so for individual success it's best to race in the same class and to keep the same doubles pairing for the whole series. At the last race, trophies are presented for 1st, 2nd and 3rd placed paddlers/crews in most of the classes across the entire series, with the winners also taking home a perpetual cup/shield for the year. The winners of the various club trophies are also announced.



Venues – The usual venues for these events are Bishop's Stortford, Cambridge, Barking, Maidstone, Chelmsford, and Leighton Buzzard.

Costs – Winter Series Races cost £5 for Juniors and £10 for Seniors (based on age on 1st January, not the class you are racing in). There are no late fees.



d. Nottingham Sprint Regattas

Nottingham sprint regattas are organised by the Paddle UK Sprint Racing Committee, with all classes of athletes competing from the lightening class right up to Olympic standard. Clubs from all over the UK attend.



There are four regattas a year April, May/June, July & September. They are held at the National Water Sports Centre lake at Holme Pierrepont, West Bridgeford, Nottingham.

They take place over a weekend - those staying for both days generally camp on site.

Fees are per race entered. There may be qualification requirements to participate. Adults also need to be On-Water Members of Paddle UK.

Races are over 200m, 500m, 1000m & 2.5k; they are based on age and ability. Men's, Men's Veteran (over 35), Ladies, & juniors with four groups in each, A – D classes with A being the fastest and D being the slowest in group. For each class there are races in K1, K2 & K4's depending on amount entered in each there is a heat and a final, over the weekend there are on average 220 races. There is one race of each distance normally for each class.



2. HOW YOU CAN TAKE PART

The arrangements vary according to what type of race it is and these will be covered in section 2, but some things are common to all marathon races and local sprints:

2.1 Arranging to Take Part

The races that the club are entering as a team over the next couple of months are the ones on the Club Activity list, which is circulated with the newsletters and displayed on the noticeboard. The list can also be downloaded from the button on the website (Club Calendar page on the Events tab).

The multi-coloured list of events on the Calendar page itself may include other events of possible interest to our members which the club is not necessarily attending. The club will usually be closed when there is a Winter Series race or an Eastern-Region Hasler marathon. We do not generally close for Nottingham Sprints or Hasler marathons in other regions. To be certain in any particular case, check the Club Activities list.

We will usually send out an email a week or so before each of the main races to remind you that the normal Sunday session will not run and how to enter. If you have not raced before, let your coach know as soon as you can that you are interested and they will advise you. Race entries are almost always made on your behalf by the club.



- For **national sprints** and **local sprint regattas**, you will be asked let the Sprint Team Leader know you wish to take part.
- For **marathons**, you should let the Team Leader know that you want to take part. If you want to use a particular club boat, include that information too. Emails from the club will confirm who the Team Leader is and how to contact them. For Haslers, entries typically have to be finalised in the middle of the week before the race; you may be able to enter later but there will be an extra "late fee", and if you withdraw after the entry has gone in you may still be charged. For Winter Series marathons get your entries in by Thursday evening if you can, but there is no late fee.

Pay for your seat fee electronically by signing in to the Mojo system and going to the Store.

There is no limit to the size of the team we can bring, so as long as the coaches and team leader are happy that you are up to it, the club will be delighted to have you taking part.

We email out the link to the official race details when they are published – do follow the link and read the details, which will include directions to the venue, any special rules or safety considerations, seat fees, the schedule for the day, and often diagrams showing the course.

2.2 Costs

There will be a seat fee (see sections for specific races). For all races a contribution of £1 is also asked from those whose boats are transported on the club trailer or by other members. For marathon races seat and trailer fees are currently still being collected as cash on the day (someone from the club will circulate to collect them from you – we will soon have a dedicated account for these payments and a card reader, but for now please make sure you have the right money).

Those in the Divisional races should wear "club colours" (a vest or other top with the yellow stripe on) as they will not score club points without. You may be able to borrow one for your first race. Club colours are option for Geoff Sanders races but we encourage you to wear them to feel part of the team. Club colours are compulsory for all in the National Sprints. To see what items are available see [the Club Kit page under the Members tab](#).

At some venues you will need to pay for parking.

2.3 What to Take with You

Bring all the things that you would normally bring for canoeing – including a towel and dry clothes. Most venues have changing rooms and showers. There will be plenty of standing around outdoors before the race starts and afterwards, so make sure you are warmly dressed, especially in winter. A "dry-robe" is ideal (a club-branded robe is available through our Club Kit page, under the Members tab on the website).

Bring water to drink and maybe a snack for before the race. Seat fees for marathon races always include "competitors food" – typically soup and a roll in winter, or a sandwich in summer, plus a biscuit and drink. Extra refreshments (often BBQ and cakes) are usually on sale at the race. The vast majority of venues now accept card payments.



Make sure you know who the Acting Team Leader on the day will be (which may not be the club's usual Sprint/Marathon Team Leader) as they will be your main point of contact.

2.4 Getting there

Other members can often offer lifts between the clubhouse and the race. Children will normally be taken by their parents – there is a consent form for parents to complete if under-16s will be going to races without their family present – download from the Document Library in the Members' section of the website.

Parents who are not accompanying their child to the race should ensure that they have the telephone number of the Acting Team Leader. They should also make sure that the Acting Team Leader has their contact details on the day, if different from those on the consent form.

2.5 Transporting the boats

We meet at the clubhouse early in the morning to load the boats onto the trailer or car roof racks before travelling to the race. The time we need to meet depends on the start time of the race and how far away it is. The time you need to be at the club will be announced by email.

It is each paddler's own responsibility to make sure that the equipment they need (boat, paddle, buoyancy aid) is transported to race and brought back safely. Most boats travel on the club trailer, but you still need to be there to ensure that it is loaded, and to select your paddle and buoyancy aid, and then to help put it all away again afterwards.



If it really is not practical for you to come to the club on occasion, make sure that another member knows exactly what equipment and boat you need and is willing to see to it on your behalf. In some cases it may be possible to collect equipment from the club beforehand, but you should ask the permission of the Quartermaster before removing any club equipment – especially if it will be away overnight or if you are not part of a club-organised team.

2.6 Spectating

Paddlers' families are encouraged to attend races and cheer us on. Many venues offer the opportunity of a pleasant walk along the tow path while the race is in progress, and in the summertime you can take a picnic. Most venues are dog-friendly.

2.7 Before your race

When you arrive, seek out your Team Leader to let them know you have arrived. They will already have your race number board for you, or will tell you what you need to do to get it. Get your equipment ready, put your number board on the boat and secure it with a pin.

There will be a competitors' briefing before the race which you need to attend. Please ensure you listen, as some of the information may be very important. Ask your team leader about anything you do not understand.



2.8 After your race

When you have finished, get off the water and move your boat out of the way. Ideally, get someone to help you load your boat on the trailer/car or at least put it near to the trailer with the other Stortford boats. Take any of your own items but leave club equipment (buoyancy aid, paddles) in the boat.

If you have experienced issues of any kind during the, raise them first with your Team Leader as soon as you can.

Your race number board must be returned as soon as you finish the race. They will probably have said what to do with it at the briefing. There may be collection boxes - have a look near where the competitors' food is being given out. If you are not sure, ask your Team Leader - if it is not handed in at the end of the race there will be a **£5 fine** which the club will pass on to you!

You will probably want to go and get dry and changed as soon as possible. At marathon races, don't forget to collect your competitors food (after you have washed your hands).



As the results are worked out they will be put up on display (on site and/or online - if they are online, look out for a poster with a QR code). Ideally you should stay long enough to check that your result looks right, and tell your Team Leader straight away if you think there has been any mistake.

The day will end with a prize-giving, which may be some while after the races have finished. There are usually trophies for 1st, 2nd and 3rd in each race (this might depend on the number of competitors) - if you have won a trophy but cannot stay to collect it, another club member will usually bring it back for you.

2.9 Going home & unloading

Once you have made sure that your board is handed back and any club equipment is safely loaded for the return journey, you can leave if you wish. Please remember to check with the person towing the trailer or Team Leader about arrangements for meeting up back at the club for unloading the equipment. We expect all members who have used club equipment to help with the unloading, by which time it is usually mid to late afternoon.