

GET RACING

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

There are 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 in the events list that is sent out with each newsletter.

Paddlers usually begin by taking part in small locally-organised **Summer Series** 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 **Nottingham Sprints** run by British Canoeing.

1. THINGS PADDLERS & PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

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:

1.1 Arranging to Take Part

A week or two before each race, the name and date of the race will be written on the white-board in the foyer of the clubhouse. If you would like to take part, discuss with your coach which boat you should use, then add your name and boat to the list.

We will usually send out an email a week or so before the race which will include any available links to the published race details, as well as details of the boat transport arrangements. Make sure you know who the Team Leader will be on the day as they will be your main point of contact.

The club will usually be closed when there is a Winter Series race or an Eastern-Region Hasler marathon. We are usually partially or fully closed for Summer Series races. We do not generally close for Nottingham Sprints or Hasler marathons in other regions. To be certain in any particular case, check the events list circulated with the newsletters and which can also be downloaded from the Events page of the website.

1.2 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. You should ideally wear a vest in club colours (£15), though you may be able to borrow one for your first race - while you can race without a vest, you may not score any points without one!

1.3 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 before the race starts and afterwards, so make sure you are warmly dressed in winter. Bring water to drink and maybe a snack for before the race. You will not get home again until mid afternoon, so you might want to bring a packed lunch for after the race. Food (often BBQ and cakes) may be on sale at the race – check with other paddlers whether this is likely.

1.4 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 – 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 Team Leader. They should also make sure that the Team Leader has their contact details, if different to the details on the consent form.



1.5 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 on the whiteboard and 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 will need to get a committee member to sign it out for you in the equipment borrowing book. Do make sure that you know the start time and location of the race!



1.6 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. (Check details for each race – organisers may feel the need to restrict who can spectate in response to Covid risk).

1.7 Before and after 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 may be a competitors briefing before the race which you may need to attend, or this information may be distributed electronically beforehand – either way, please ensure you have listened/read as it will include any important safety announcements.



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. You will probably want to go and get dry and changed as soon as possible. At marathon races there will usually be free food for the competitors directly after the race.

Your race number board must be returned as soon as you finish the race. Unless instructed otherwise, make sure you give it to your Team Leader as soon as possible - 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!

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. As the results are worked out they will be put up on display (on site and/or online) – ideally you should stay long enough to check these and tell your Team Leader straight away if you think there has been any mistake. Traditionally, there is 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, depending 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. At some races, formal prizegiving may be suspended as a Covid precaution.

Members who have used club equipment should return to the clubhouse to help with the unloading before going home, by which time it is usually mid to late afternoon.

2. SPECIFIC RACE INFORMATION

This section covers the things which vary from race to race -

- a. Summer Series Regattas
- b. Hasler & Geoff Sanders Marathon Races
- c. Winter Series Marathons
- d. Nottingham Sprint Regattas

a. Summer Series Regattas

A short series of local informal sprint regattas are run by the Flatwater Racing Association during the summer months. These events are particularly suitable for juniors and novices.



There are 16 classes: male and female in each of u10, u12, u14, u16, u18, u23, 23+ and veteran (35+). Racing is done in small groups of about 4 to 6 boats, determined by speed so that paddlers compete directly against those of similar ability. During each regatta paddlers will usually race about six times, over distances between 200m and 1000m. At least one of these is

usually a crew race, and for these the more experienced paddlers are encouraged to partner the less experienced ones.

Paddlers score points for their performance in the singles races – these are added together to determine their position within their class on the day, and the regatta ends with the presentation of the medals. Trophies for each class are also given out at the last regatta of the year for performance across the series.

Venues: The usual venues for all of these events are Chelmsford, Hackney (Leaside), Cheshunt (Herts Young Mariners Base) and Bishop's Stortford.

Cost and booking in: A single seat fee of £5 covers all the day's races. Paddlers pay individually at the booking in desk at the start of the day and will be handed a number board. Although there is no late fee, we still need to know you are coming if at all possible, in order to plan boat transport and prepare number boards. If you don't manage to get your name on the board at the club by the previous Sunday, please contact club Sec Angela Aldam.

b. Hasler & Geoff Sanders Marathon Races

The Hasler series is organised by British Canoeing on a regional basis – Stortford is in the Eastern Region. Paddlers are ranked by past performance into 9 divisions. New paddlers start in Division 9 and are promoted/demoted as necessary following each race. Most paddlers use racing kayaks, though a few use racing canoes. There are separate races for singles and doubles, arranged by division. 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. 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 races – a separate series of shorter races for under 14s (typically 2 miles, no portages). Age is determined on 1st January. There are three classes: A, B and C, based on performance, with A being the fastest. Only under-12s can enter B and C. (Note: these races replace the former "Lightning" and Div 10 classes.)

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. Typical prices are £9 for seniors, £7 for juniors and £3 for Geoff Sanders. BSCC members can race using their Club Associate British Canoeing membership until they reach a high standard (Div 6+).

Entries - Race entries are made on your behalf by the club – usually the Team Leader for in-region races. You can check who it is for any particular race by checking the Events list on the website or the one circulated with the newsletters. Entries typically need to go in on the Wednesday/Thursday before the race. If you can't get down to the club to add your name to the board, or if you were on the list but need to pull out, please contact the Team Leader as soon as possible via phone or email. Entries can usually be made on the day, but cost more (usually an extra £5 "late fee"). 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.

At the race – When you arrive, find the Team Leader who will give you your race number – it will be a different number for each race. Someone from BSCC will collect your seat fee usually in cash on the day. Never go to the booking in desk yourself unless asked to do so by your Team Leader or a Race Official. Raise any issues through your Team Leader.

c. Winter Series Marathons

From November to March, BSCC participates in the Winter Series organised by the Flatwater Racing Association. Instead of 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 trophies for individual performances at each race, and also score points for themselves and for the club. For maximum points it's best to race in the same class and the same doubles pairing for the whole series. At the last race, trophies are awarded for the entire series, and the overall positions of the clubs are announced.



Venues – The usual venues for all of these events are Bishop's Stortford, Cambridge, Chelmsford, Cheshunt (Herts Young Mariners Base), Leighton Buzzard, and Barking.

Costs – Winter Series Races cost £5 per person. There are no late fees.

Arranging to Take Part in a Race - Put your name on the board at the club by the previous Sunday - this is especially important if you want to use a club boat or put a boat on the trailer. If you make a late decision to race (or not to race), let Angela know.

Booking in - If possible, please pay for your race entry in cash at the club on the week before the race, including the trailer fee if applicable. In the event that you do not race, your payment can be rolled over to the the next one or returned. There will be a designated person from BSCC (probably the Team Leader) who will give out boards and take cash from those who have not yet paid. If the board is not collected from you at the race finish, you must return it to the Stortford Team Leader before you leave, or you will be charged a £5 fine.

d. Nottingham Sprint Regattas

Nottingham sprint regattas are organised by the British Canoeing 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 five regattas a year April, May, June, July & September. They are held at the National Water Sports Centre at West Bridgeford, Nottingham.



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.