



Stakeboat Starts

Dear Captain/Coach/Competitor,

The North of England Sprint Rowing Championships is a three lane event and unusually for North-West Region events involves a stakeboat start; not unlike that experienced at Henley, Holme Pierrepont or Dorney Lake. We like to think this helps make the event fairer and tests skill that will be required in any rowing career.

Maintaining regatta racing to programme is always a challenge and with three-minute time gaps between races we wish to avoid extended start delays through crews inability to attach to a stakeboat and get aligned. These are essential rowing skills which like any other require understanding, training and practice. In recent years we have had crews whose first sight of a stakeboat has been at the regatta. This has caused significant delays with significant repercussions for the running of the event.

A stakeboat is a boat or pontoon that is used to hold the stern of each boat at the start in a side by side race. To get attached the aim is to place the stern of the boat at the end of the stakeboat to allow someone to safely hold it. You then have to maintain this position pointing in the right direction until the races starts.

We therefore require all competitors to understand all aspects of a stakeboat start and spend a little time practicing – one can use the coaching launch, a landing stage, a tree on the bank or just a notional point in the water to attach to. It is not unusual to have cross-winds, so keeping straight once attached is part of this skill set.

In particular crews and coxes need to understand and capable in:

- Spinning the boat and centring in lane prior to attaching
- Backing a boat on to the stakeboat
- Attaching and understanding when the boat is straight
- Getting or maintaining alignment by:
 - Sculling with someone else's blade also called spiking or scratching (Picture 1.)
 - Tapping on

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Picture 1. Showing how bow has passed his blade forward to 2 to enable the bows to be kept straight using short strokes close to the boat, a critical skill for use in crosswinds.

As part of this the crew needs to know the specific commands and for front loaders the cox needs to agree communications with the crew. The crew and cox need to understand the starters jobs and the start sequence, particularly in relation to their signalling whether they are ready and straight.

Rowers need to know what side they are on (Bow/Starboard/Green or Stroke/Port/Red). They should expect that race officials may use any of these terms. Know their position in the boat so that they can respond to instructions from any source.

Specific instructions that crews should be familiar with:

- Strokeside/Bowside spin
- Back it down with/without slides, stroke/bow/stern pair etc.
- Easy all
- Hold it hard/lightly/bowside/stokeside/three etc.
- Tap it bow/stroke/ bow bowside scull/ etc.
- Two paddle on with bow's blade/Three paddle on with two's blade etc.

To assist in training crews in how a start works we refer you to section 7.3 of the Rules of Racing available on the British Rowing website.

<https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-British-Rowing-Rules-of-Racing.pdf>

A good video – albeit of US crews using some of their terminology is very useful for demonstrating some of the skills required. <https://www.row2k.com/video/Stakeboat-Skills--backing--sculling---tapping/18532/>