

Rowing Officials Training

A Practical Approach to On-water Duties
UMPIRES, MARSHALL, STARTERS, ALIGNERS

October 2025

ROWING SOUTH AFRICA



Agenda

- Background
- Marshall
- Starter
- Aligner
- Umpire (and Pilot)
- Questions

ROWING SOUTH AFRICA



What are the principles?

- Safety
- Fairness



Fairness definition



All rowers shall compete fairly, showing respect for their opponents and for the regatta officials. In particular,

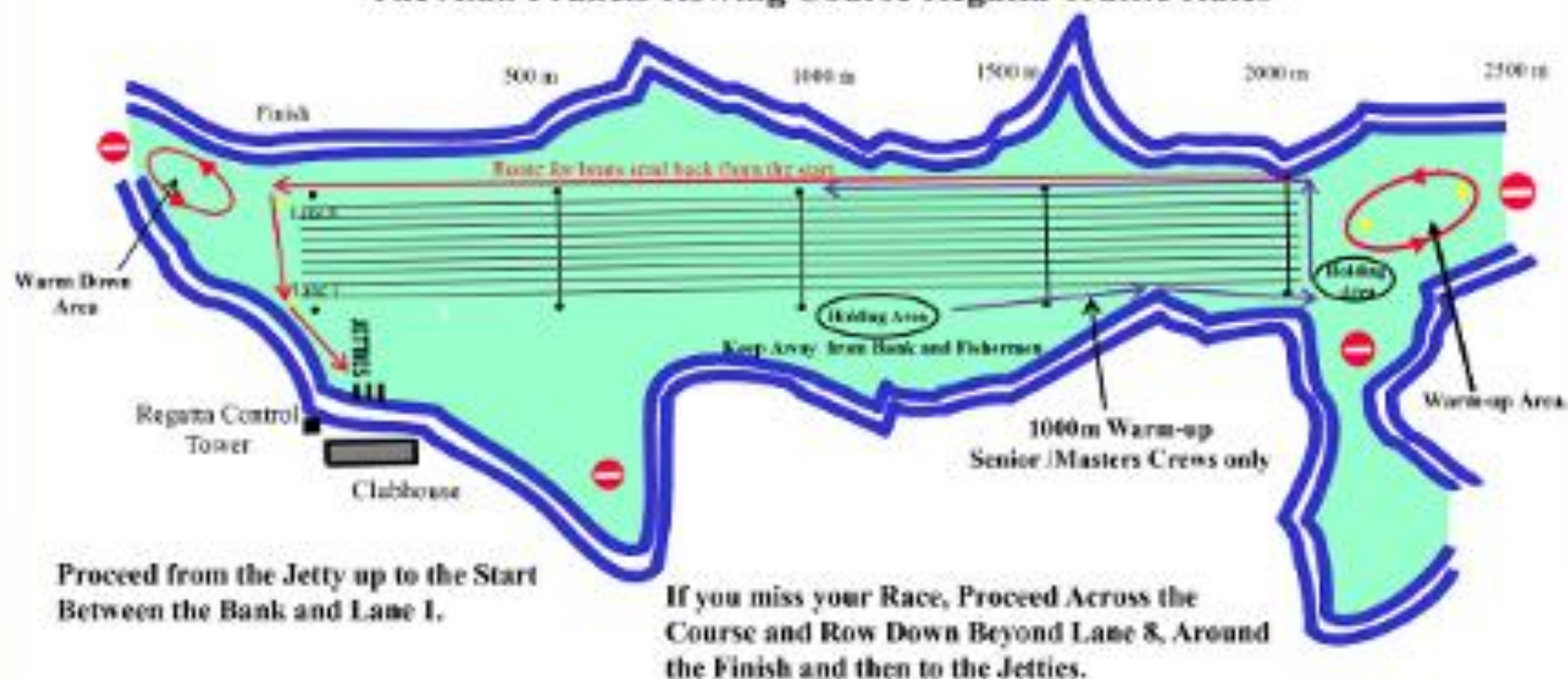
- be at the start on time
- follow instructions of the officials at all times, both on and off the water.

Officials shall

- ensure Rules of Racing applied fairly
- atmosphere of respect to all competitors.

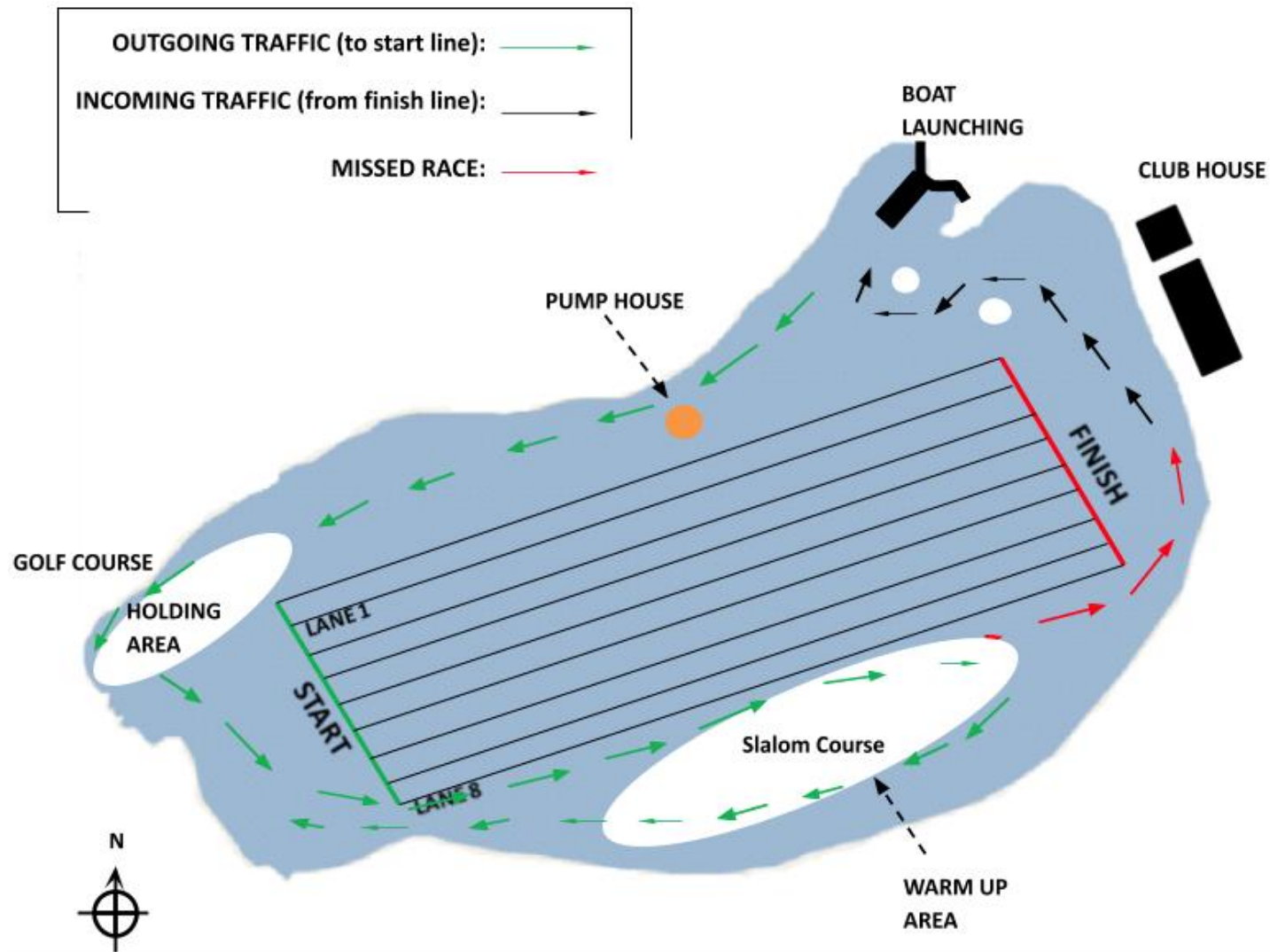
What's the most important thing we need to know before getting onto the water?

The Alan Francis Rowing Course Regatta Traffic Rules



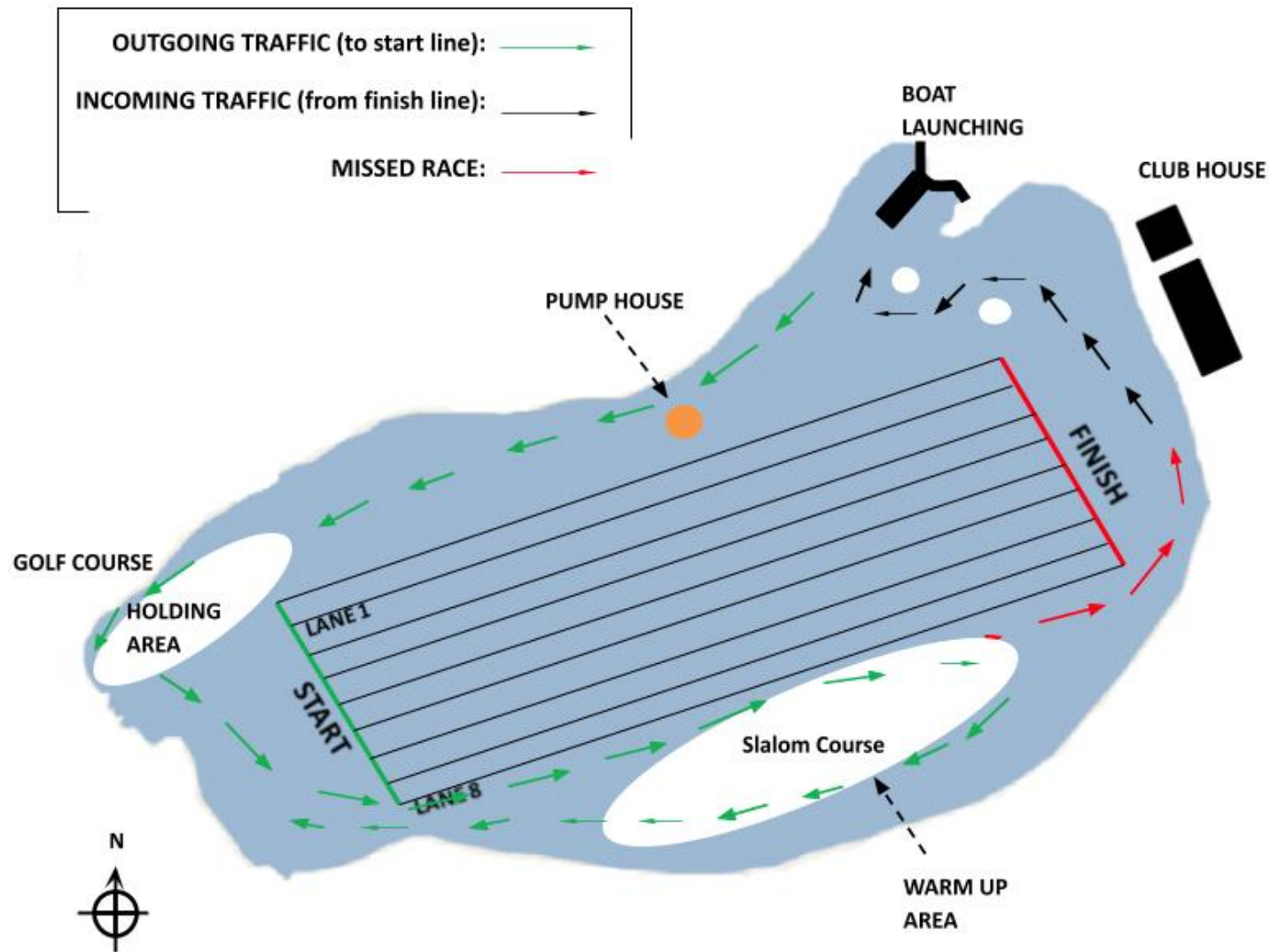
● — **Racing** — ●

Scenario:
Crew is at the pump house and decides they are not able to race. What do they do?



Under no circumstances row back against the traffic!

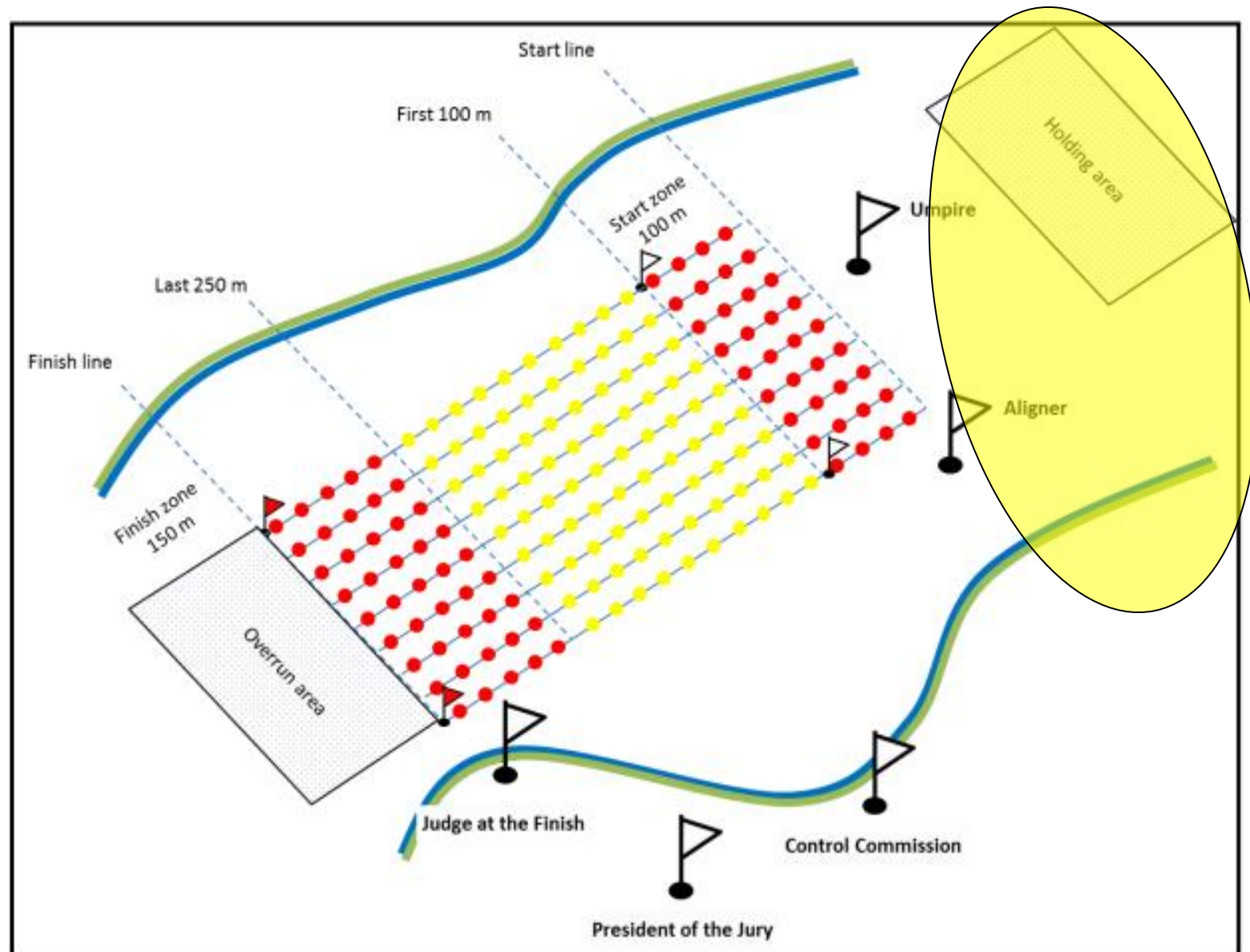
Scenario:
Crew
wants to
warm
down
after
race.
Where do
they go?



Officials at the Start

- Recognise that this is a very important moment for the rowers
- Important to assist the crews with:
 - Professionalism & respect
 - Calmness & accurate communication
 - Clear instructions – speak slowly and audibly when using loudhailer
- Advantage of a dedicated starter
 - Calm orderly start
 - Starter and marshal work together to allow umpire following the race to focus on positioning

Duties of Officials - Marshall



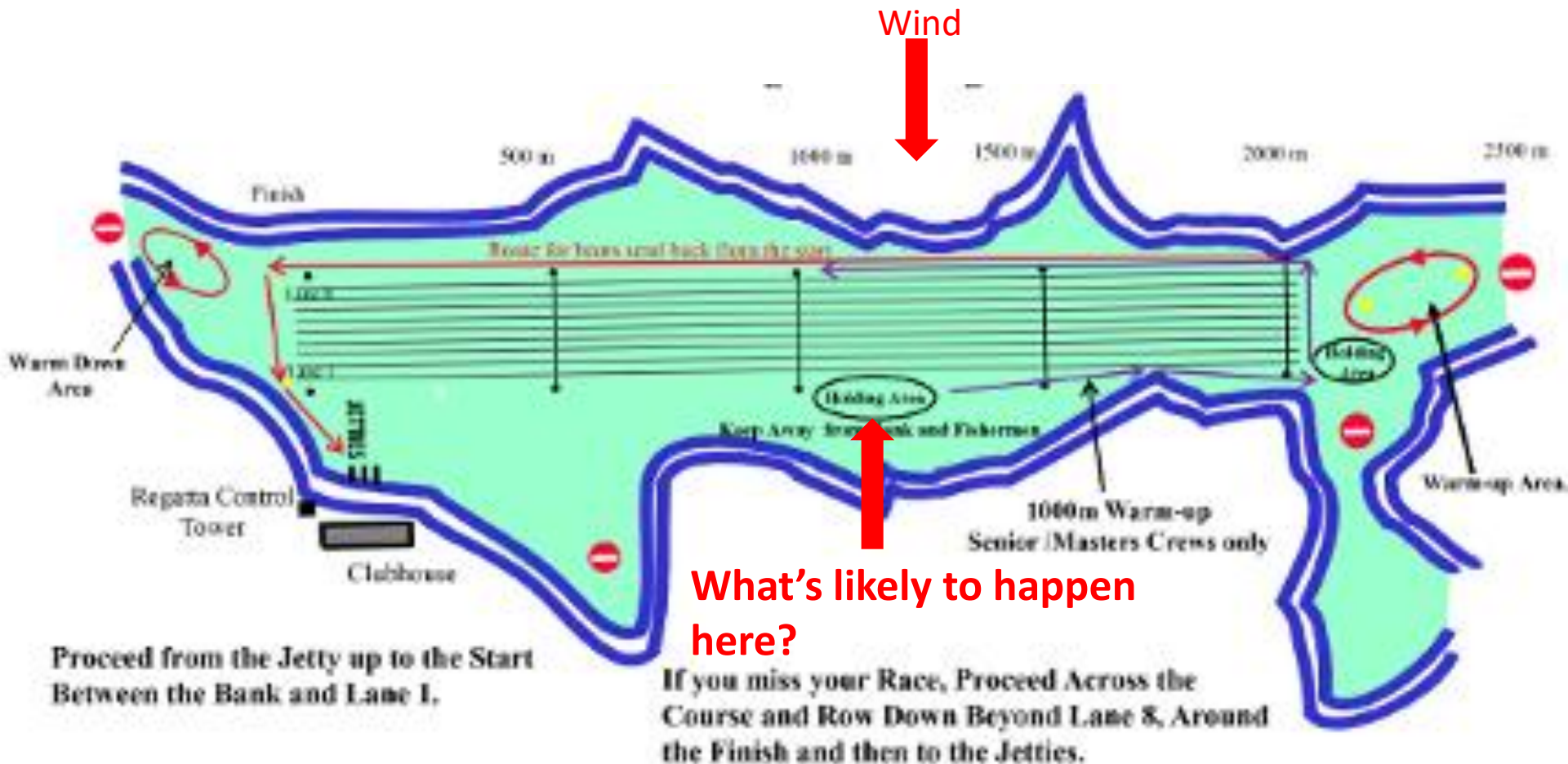
Marshall

MONITOR
WHATSAPP

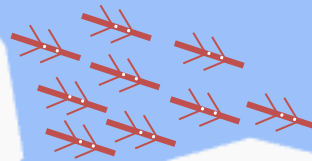
- Check crews and collect into groups
- Rack and stack behind umpire or start tower
 - Easier with umpires in position to use as markers
 - Move the crews forward as space opens up
- Don't let crews drift too far from start
 - Especially at the 1000m
- Check that crews adhere to traffic pattern
 - Crews must not race through holding areas
 - Good marshalling can keep regatta on time



Scenario: 1 000m race at Roodeplaat



Wind

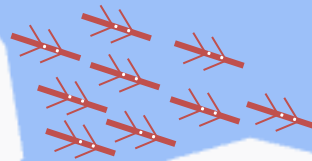


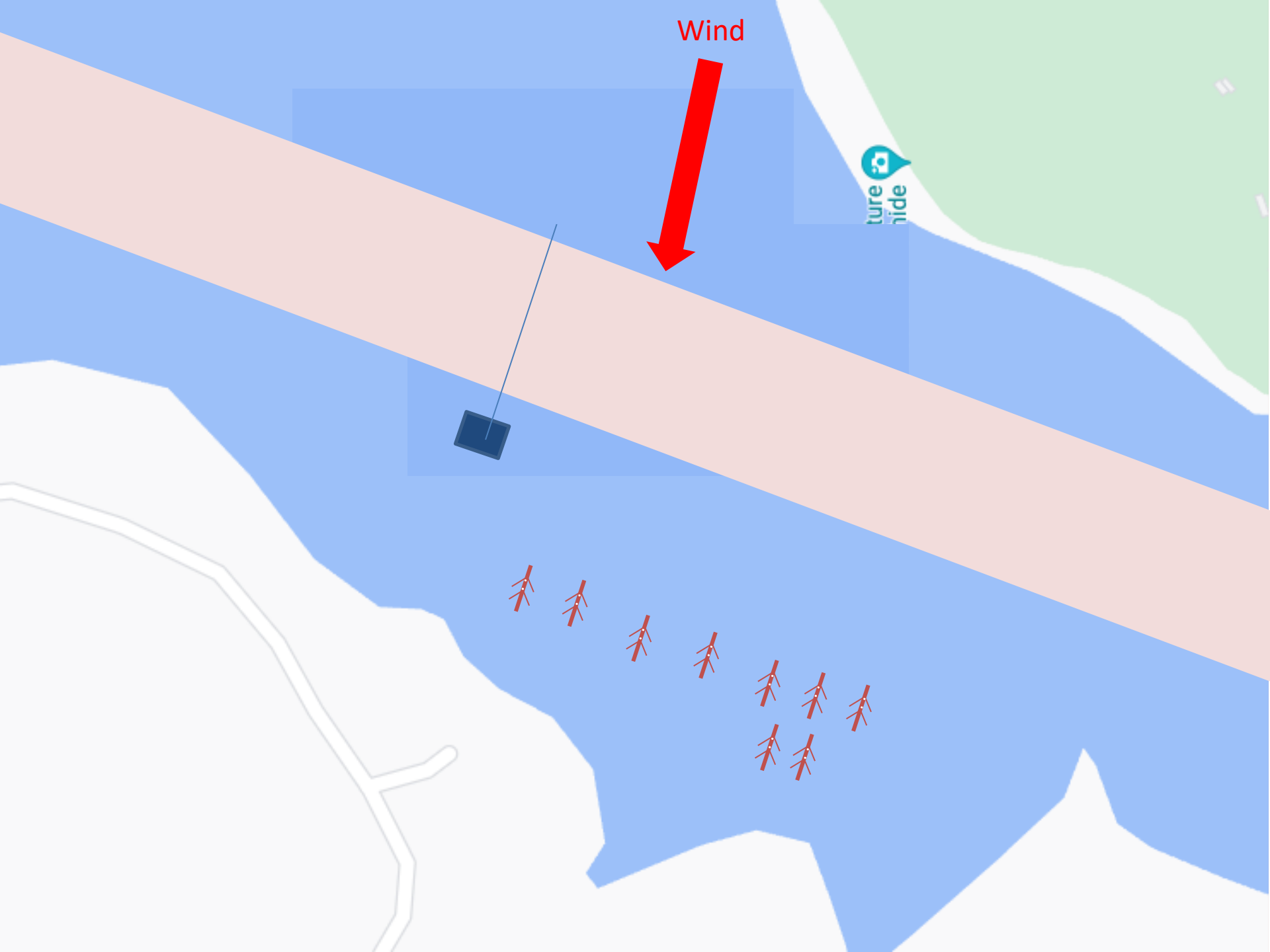
What are the likely consequences?

Wind



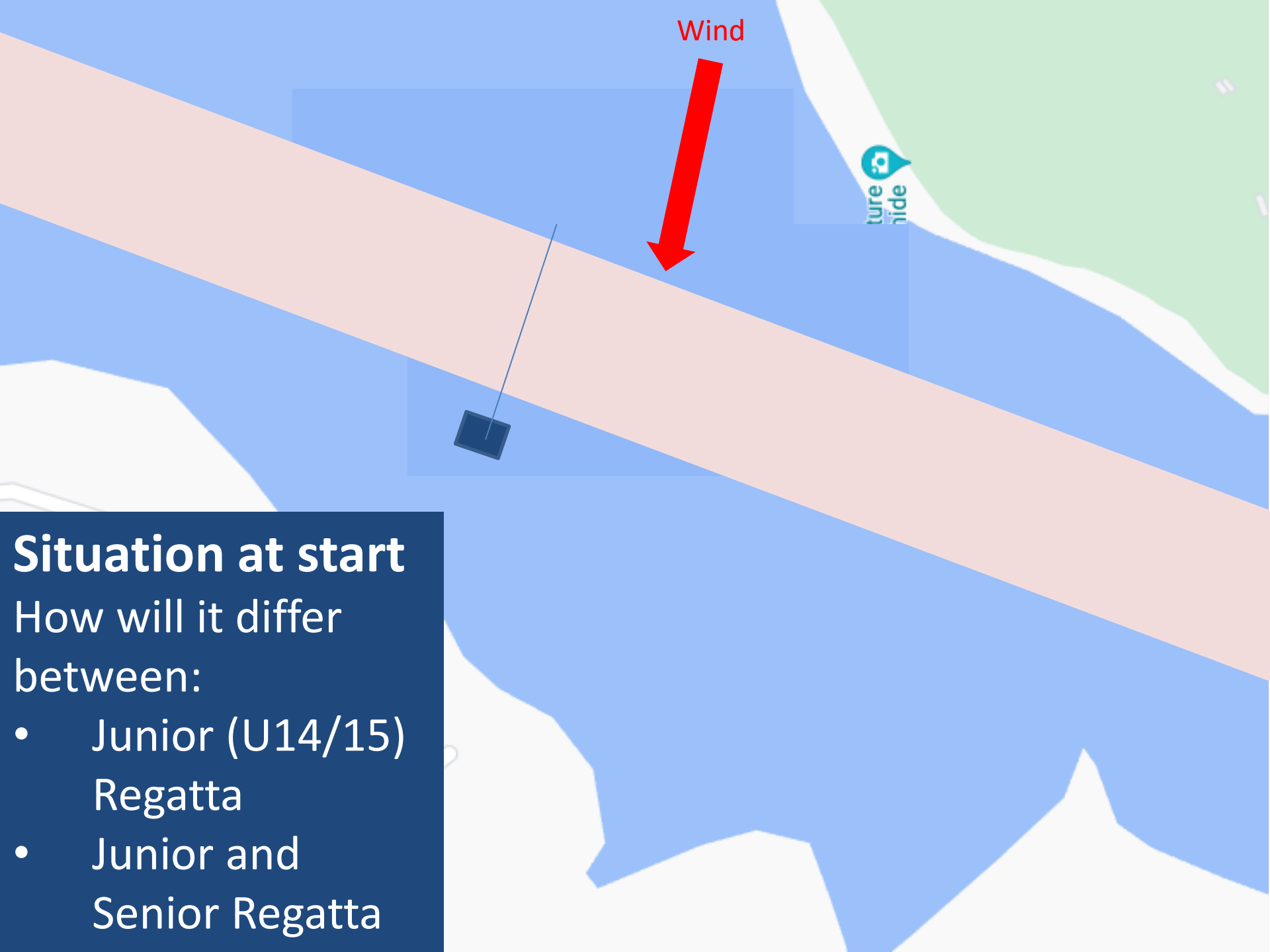
What should happen?





Wind

ture
hide

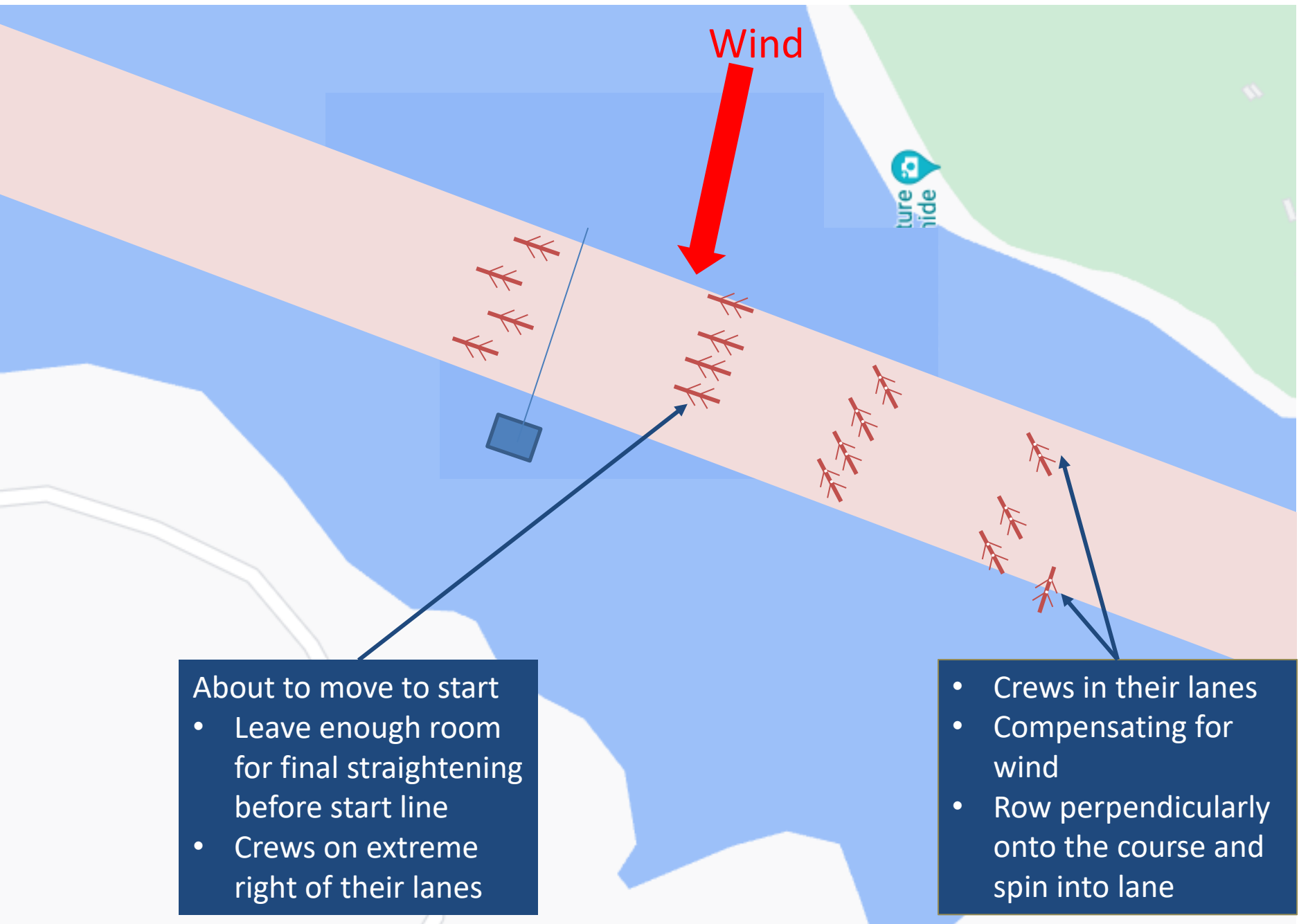


Situation at start

How will it differ
between:

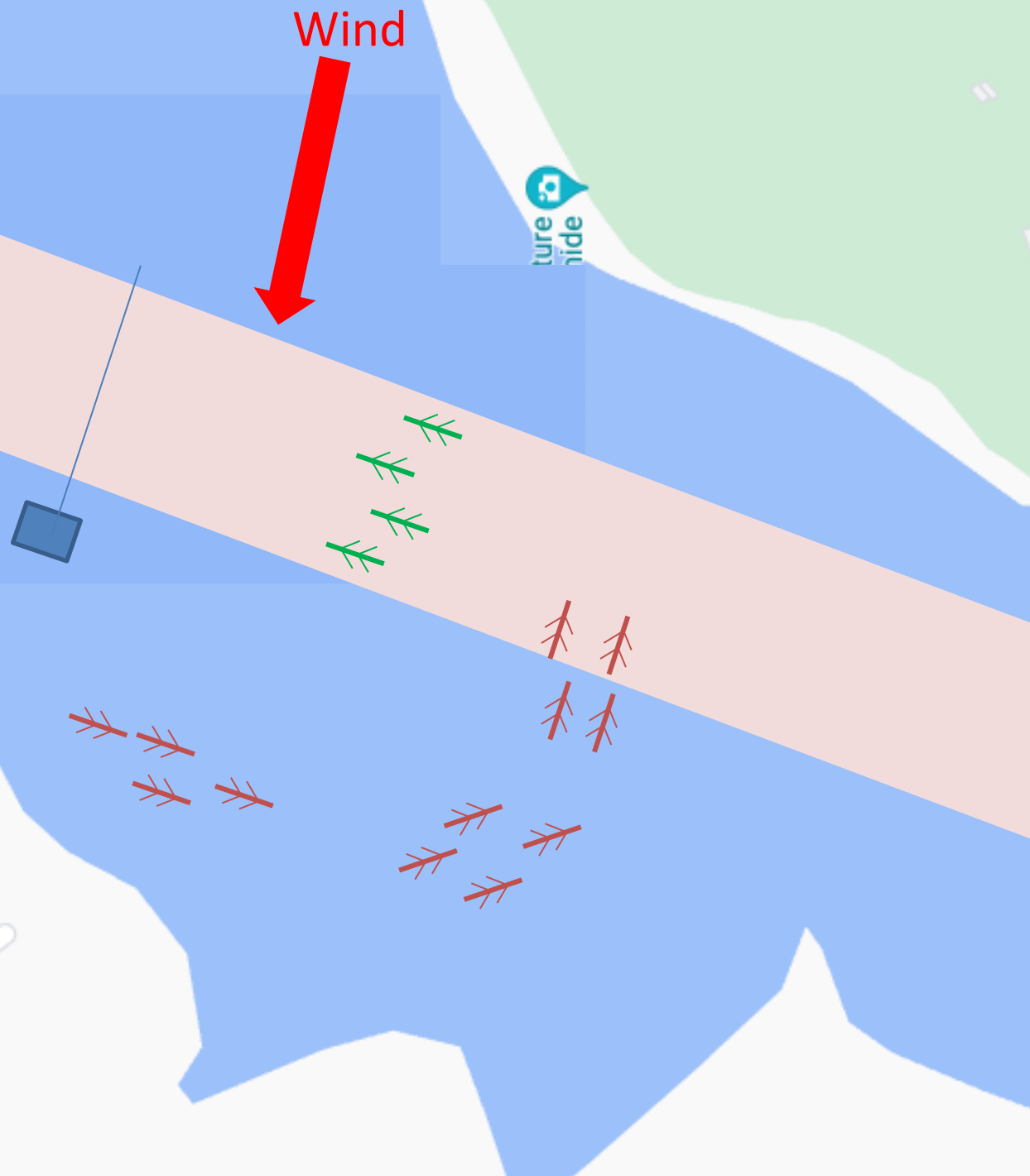
- Junior (U14/15) Regatta
- Junior and Senior Regatta

Junior Regatta (or no more 2 000m races)

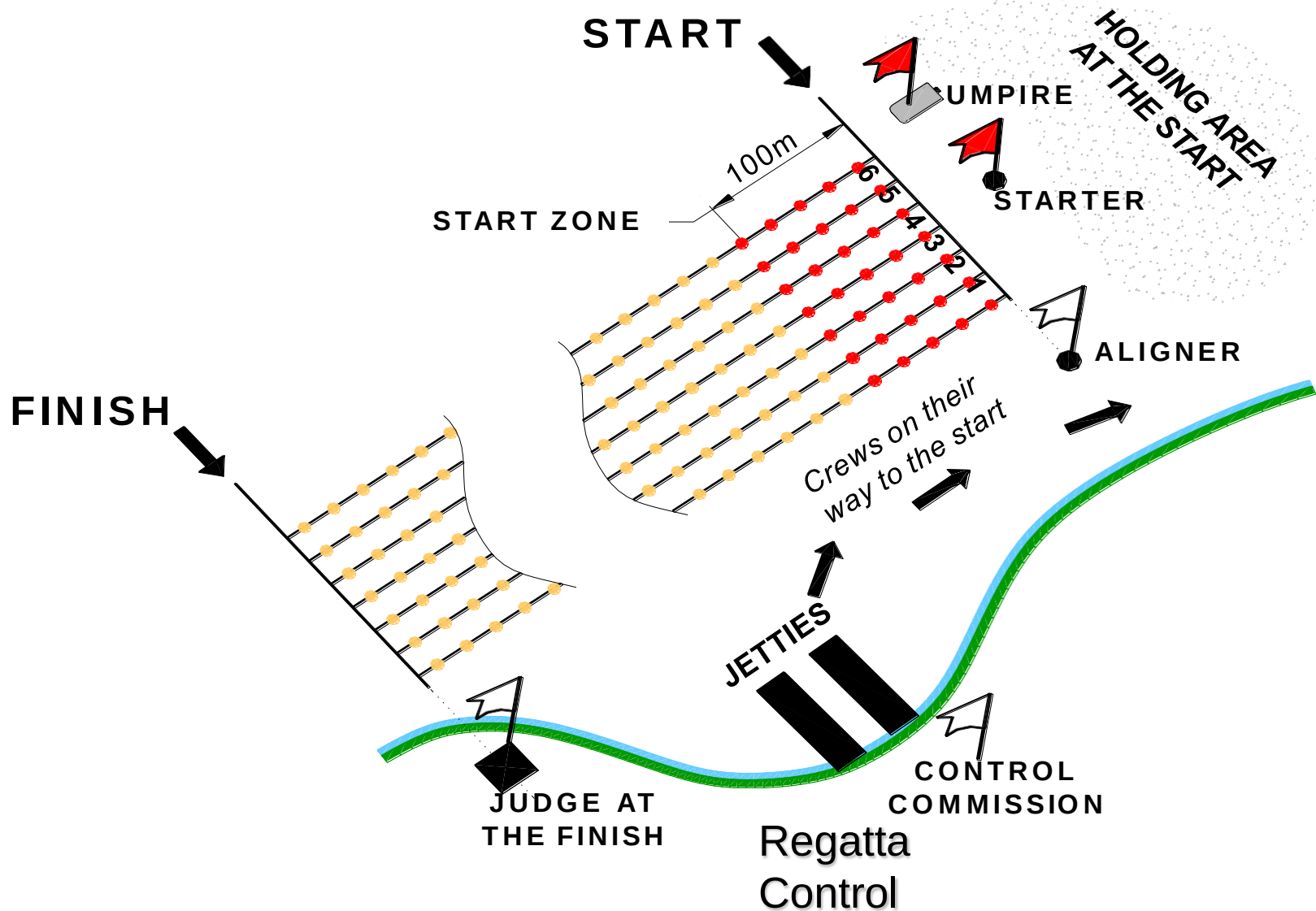


Junior and Senior Regatta

- Green boats are previous 2000m race
- Collect crews together by race while waiting
- When umpire gives the go-ahead, crews move onto the course in race-number order



Duties of officials – Starter



Starter/Umpire

- Check Whatsapp for changes to crews/schedule
- Two-minute rule:
 - At two minutes before race crews should be ready to race
 - Race should be started at race time - award yellow cards (warning) for crews arriving after 2 minutes
 - Inform crews carrying a warning (yellow card) into the race (e.g. for traffic violation)
- Check dress code
- Only start race when:
 - The course is clear
 - The previous race has progressed sufficiently
 - All crews are present (if it's before race start time)
 - Assistant (Pilot or Starter assistant) has completed calling in the race

Dress code

- Tri suits must be the same
 - Careful when uniform is changed
 - Be sensitive - some schools cannot afford uniforms
 - Can give a warning (yellow card) at 2 mins - but better to address proactively prior to start
- Hats those worn must be the same
 - Excluding religious head gear
 - Do not have to wear a hat
 - Hats and peaks can be mixed provided they are uniform in design and style
- Same for undershirts and leggings
 - Neutral colour not to compromise racing uniform
- Sunglasses are not controlled

What happens if a crew suffers a breakage prior to start?

Rule 5.7.1

If a crew sustains any damage to its boat or equipment on the way to the start or in any designated holding area, the crew can bring this to the attention of the umpire.

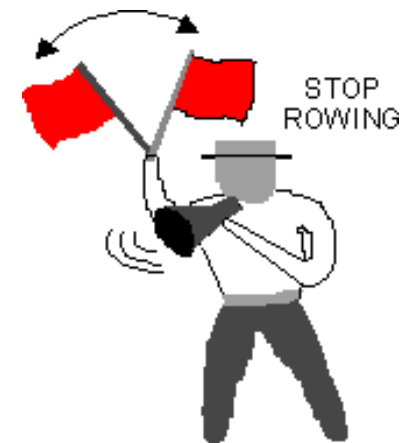
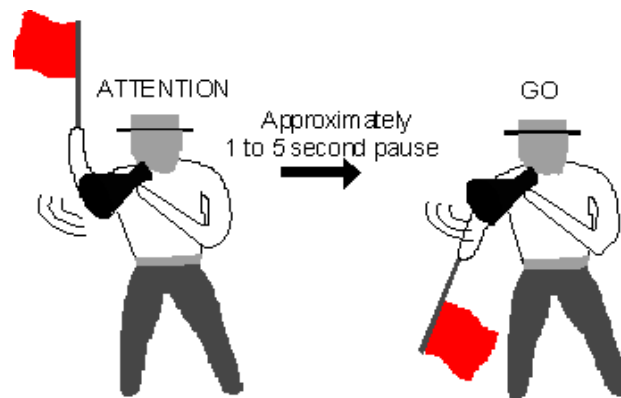
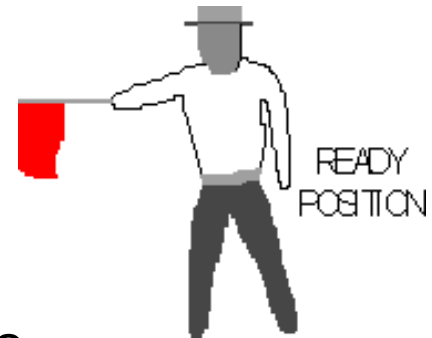
After having examined the damage and in consultation with the President of the Jury, the umpire shall decide on an appropriate course of action that could include rejecting the claim, effecting repairs or delaying the start of the race.

Start Protocol (New)

- Objective is for crews to experience a smooth and standardized approach
 - Irrespective of flags vs electronic start systems
- Separation of *Invite onto Course* and *Roll call*
- When the course is clear (5 mins), starter to invite crews onto the course
 - Announce race details, lane number, crew and stroke name.
- Starter to announce minutes to start (from 5 to 3).
- Immediately prior to **2 min start the** Roll call:
 - Starter to do formal roll call prior to handing over to aligner
 - Only crew names are used

Umpire as Starter - Protocol

- When course is clear announce the race (i.e. *Invite onto Course*) and marshal crews
- Conduct *Roll Call* prior to 2 minutes
- At 2 mins move flag to *Ready Position* which “instructs” the aligner to commence aligning
 - Everyone in start area to be quiet and not move
- Wait for aligner’s white flag and “Hold it all crews”
- Check that crews are straight (no need to check for raised hands but good etiquette to check)

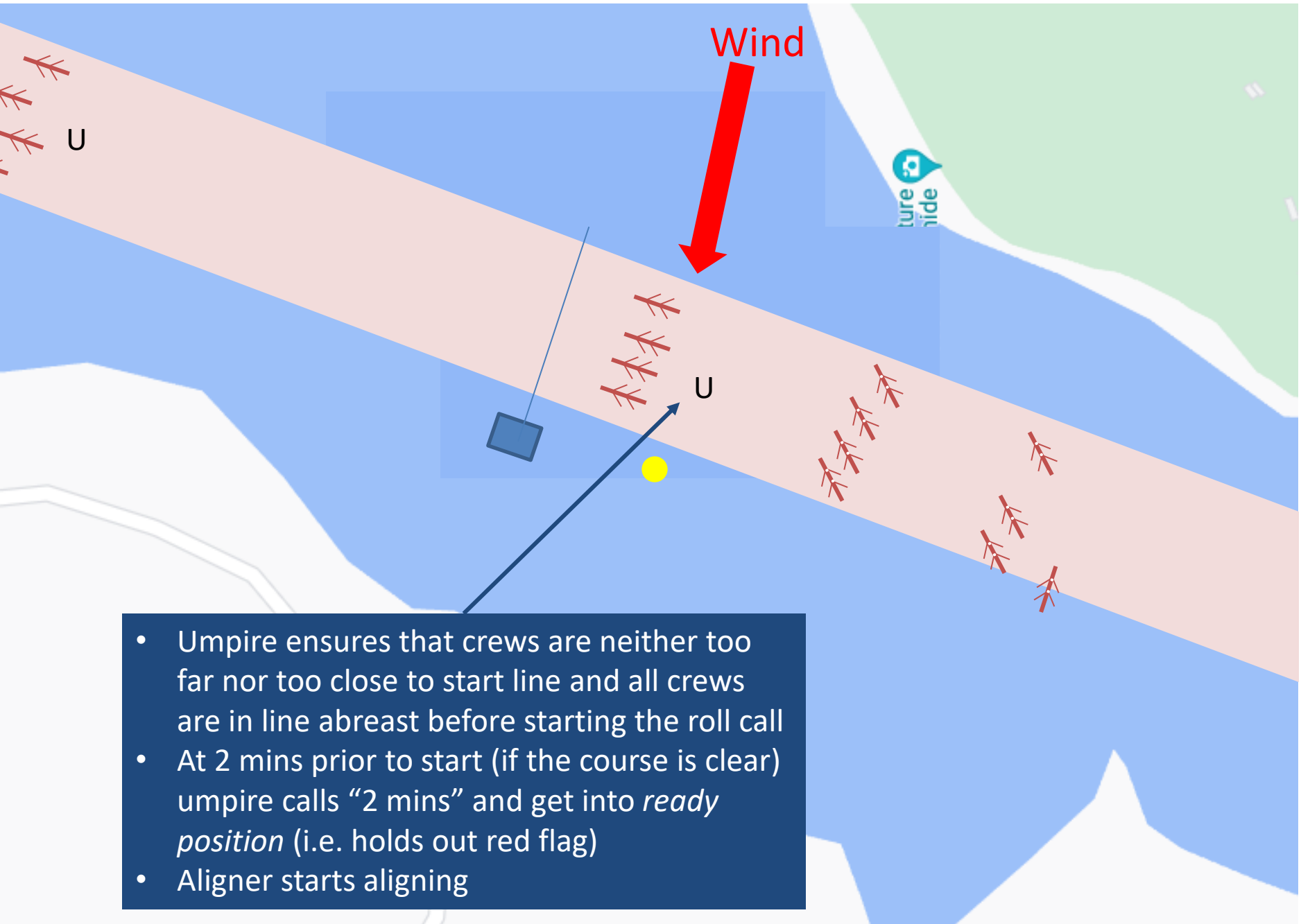


- Check that aligner does not call false start

Practical Implementation – invite onto course



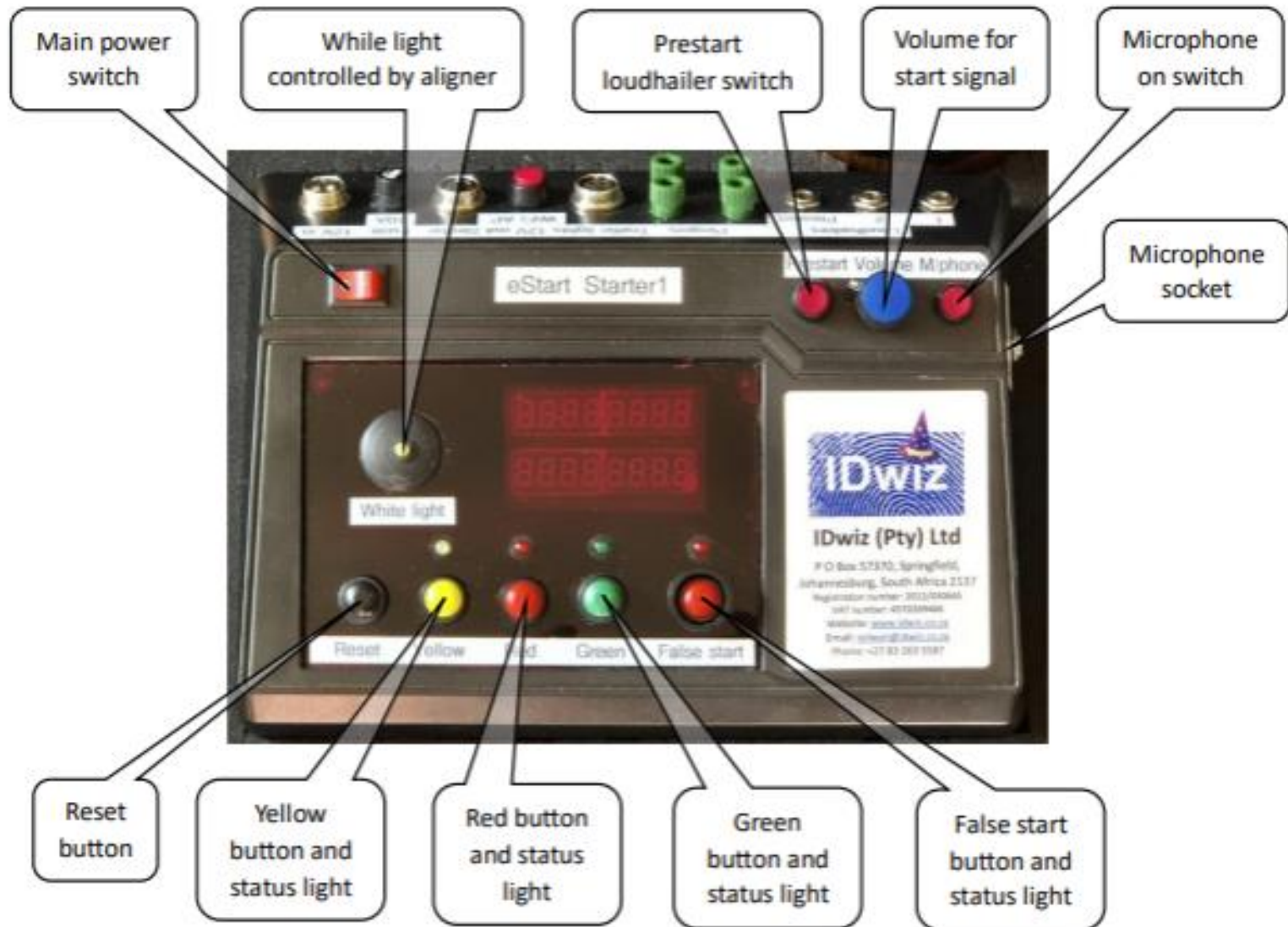
Practical Implementation – Roll Call



Electronic Start - Protocol

- When course is clear announce the race (i.e. *Invite onto Course*) – ensure that all the correct crews are in the race
- Call crews to the start – **white buoys behind tower** (use pre-start loud hailer)
- At each minute announce the number of minutes to the start (5 down to 3)
- Conduct formal *roll call* immediately prior to 2 minutes and award any yellow cards
- Confirm that the umpire is ready, call “2 minutes”, yellow light on, Aligner starts
- Wait for aligner’s white light
- Starter calls “All crews”, a clear pause, call “Attention” turn red light on
- Check white flag is still there
- After 1 to 5 seconds press the green button to start the race. Red traffic light changes to green, sounder to start, pings the pingers and starts a back up time.
- Check that aligner does not call a false start
- If equipment fails, fall back to flags - communicate to Aligner, Judge at Finish, POJ AND crews. Keep flags for the rest of the specific event for consistency

Electronic Starters Panel



Electronic Start Protocol

- At 2 min Starter to announce, “2 min to start” and press Yellow Button
 - The yellow light is the signal to start aligning, there is no ‘over to you aligner’
- Aligner to align
 - There is no ‘hold it all crews’
 - Aligner to press the White Button, and raise white flag as a backup, when crews aligned
- Starter announce
 - “All Crews” <pause>
 - “Attention” press Red Button <pause 1 – 5 sec>
 - press Green Button
- False Start
 - Only the aligner can decide, press Red Button, and raise red flag as a backup

Electronic Start (Nuances)

- The radio link between the two units can fail, revert to flags if there appears to be an issue
- The device can be reset with the umpire radios, do not use radios within 1m of the unit
- When a new start sequence is initiated, the backup time from the previous race is lost
- The white light can be intermittent, the starter must watch the aligner
- The WPS access must be on before you turn the device on
- The yellow light must be positioned horizontally for visibility around the start tower and down the course.



Roodeplaat Dam 2000m

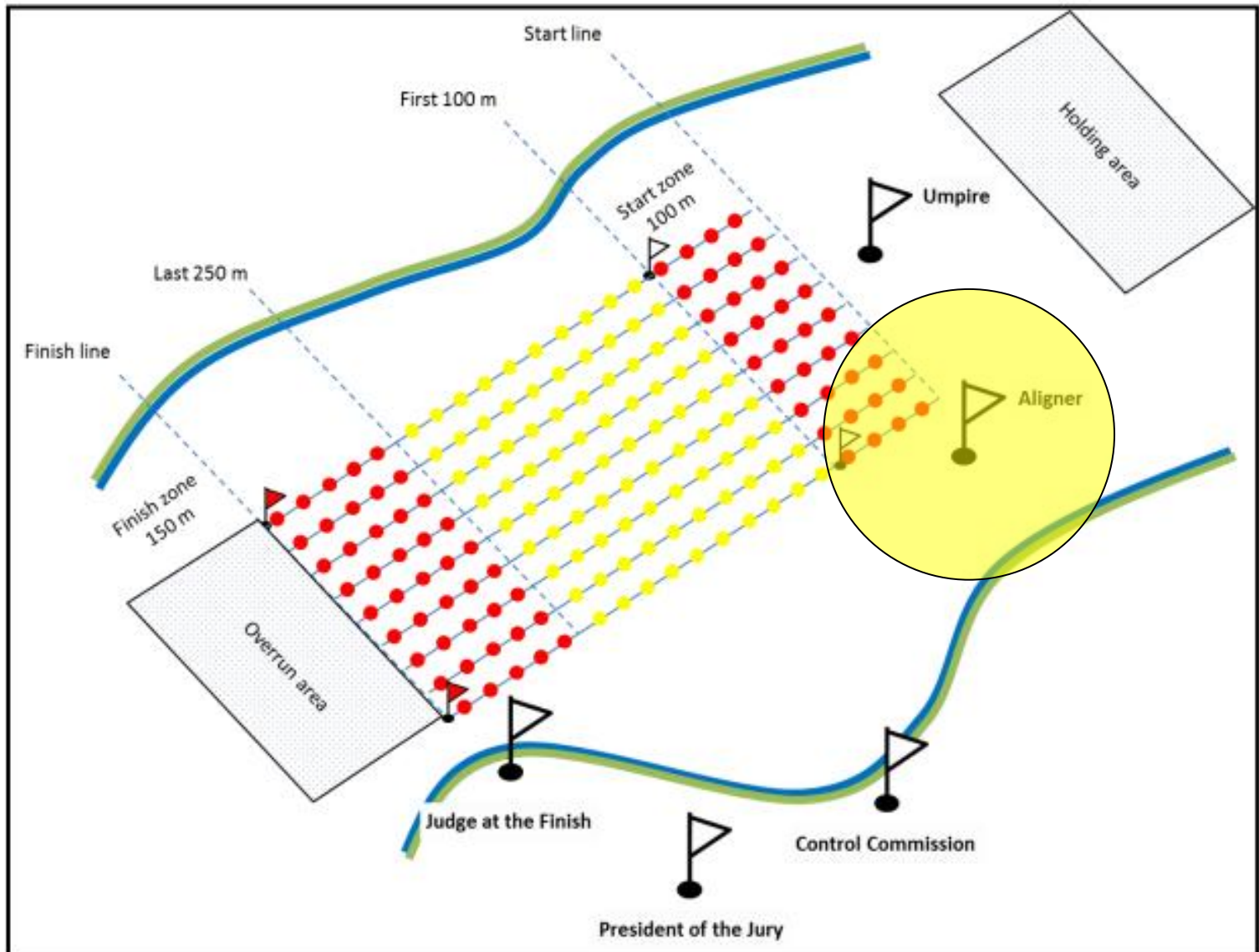
Aligner

White Buoys

Start Tower

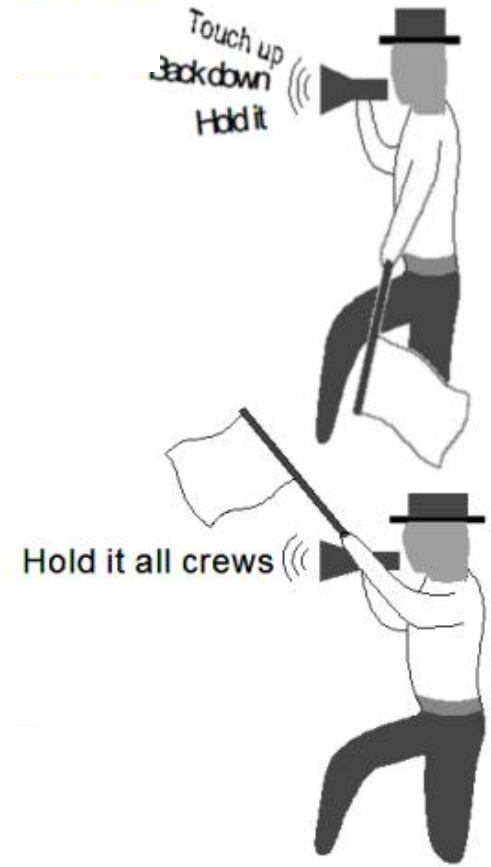
1. The marshal racks and stacks from the white buoys
2. The starter announces the race, tells crews how many minutes to the start and awards any yellow/red cards
3. The crews proceed in their lanes to the start side of the tower
4. Starter proceeds with formal roll call and awards any last-minute yellow cards
5. The assistant starter calls in the race on the radio and starter calls "2 minutes"
6. The umpire normally plays no part at the start (but In the absence of a marshal the umpire can assist)
7. The umpire starts from behind the crews – unless physically impossible (or at PoJ's direction)

Duties of Officials - Aligner



Aligning Procedure

- If using a white flag, hold it down (i.e. not out)
- Do the aligning
 - <lane> touch/back <distance>
 - <lane> let it run
 - <lane> hold or hold hard
- Check that starter/umpire is ready
- Indicate that boats are aligned by
 - Pressing the white button; or
 - raising white flag and calling “Hold it all crews”
- Check for false starts
- Keep to the racing schedule (Electronic control has regatta time so you can gauge when to end alignment to allow race to start on time)



Assistant Aligner's duties

- Update the program as necessary
- Press the electronic start button (if available)
- Start the stop watch for each race
- Pass time to time box should the start be missed
- Mark off crews as they arrive at the start
- Manage radio communications



Aligner notes

- Crews must be aligned properly
 - Especially for senior and A events
- Take spare rope to tie boat in position
- Tie equipment to boat in case it falls overboard
- Don't leave boat unmanned
 - Crews may row into boat

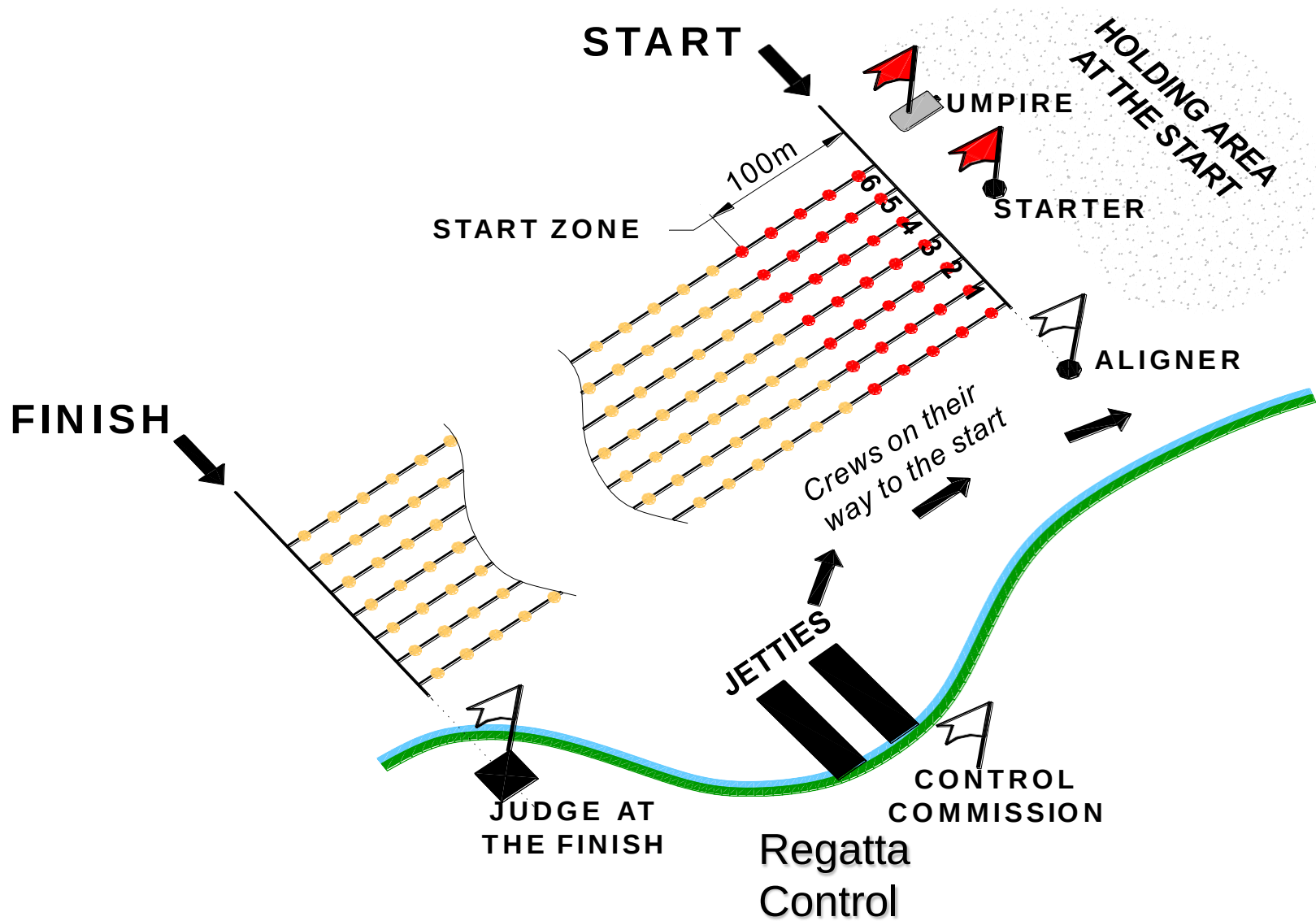
Rolling Start - Procedure

- Only to be used when umpire and starters duties have been combined
- Umpire calls crews to start
- Umpire's Red Flag waist high to the side
- Aligner calls crews to catch up/slow down
- When crews close to start line, Aligner without stopping the crews – Raises the white flag
- Aligner Command: "Prepare to Race"
- Umpire Command: "Attention, Go" with no pause
- If same event inform next umpire to do rolling start

Comparison Electronic Start vs Umpire as Starter

	Electronic	Umpire as Starter
Announce the race, award yellow cards, call the roll	Starter	Umpire
Prior to roll call	Check that umpire is ready	N/A
Aligner starts aligning at 2 mins when	Yellow strobe light is on	Umpire's red flag is horizontal
Crews are aligned	Aligner press white button	Aligner white flag is raised and "hold it all crews" is called
Start	Call "all crews", pause, then call "attention" & turn on red light, pause (1-5 secs) press green button	Call "attention" pause (1-5 secs) then "go"
False start	Aligner presses "false start" button while green light is on (10 secs)	Aligner waves red flag and initiates audible alarm

Duties of Officials - Umpire



Umpire



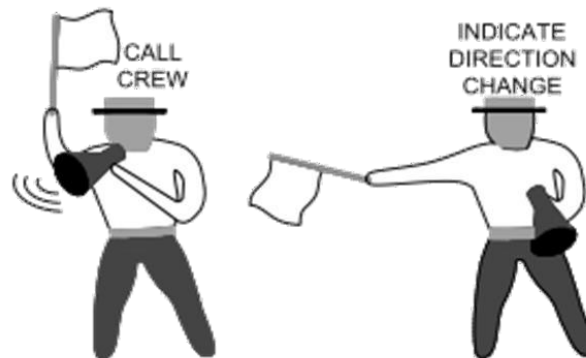
- Responsible for the conduct of the race (other than those duties specifically allocated to Starter & Aligner)
- Understand the traffic rules and local rules as published in the regatta notice and displayed at the venue
- Check all equipment supplied and review radio protocol
- **GOLDEN RULE:**
 - 1. *Rower's Safety is your MAIN Concern***
 - 2. *Each competitor must be afforded an equal chance of winning***

Umpire 2

- After Command “Go”
 - Immediately follow crews in the middle of the course
 - Instruct pilot on boat positioning
 - ensure that white flag is used (unless race is to be stopped)
- Keep all crews clear from wake
 - Except if safety issue; clash in medal positions; crew trailing behind
- Watch crews behind your boat
- Don't show flag when not used (no flapping flags)

Umpire 3

- Crews are allowed to leave their lanes
 - as long as this does not interfere with other boats
- Don't steer crews unless
 - Affecting another crew who is in its own water
 - Obstruction
- If crew is told to stop rowing, can tell them to continue
 - “<crew> continue rowing”
- Call crew –show direction it is to move
 - Can use “Keep Apart”
- Remember safety of crews and boats



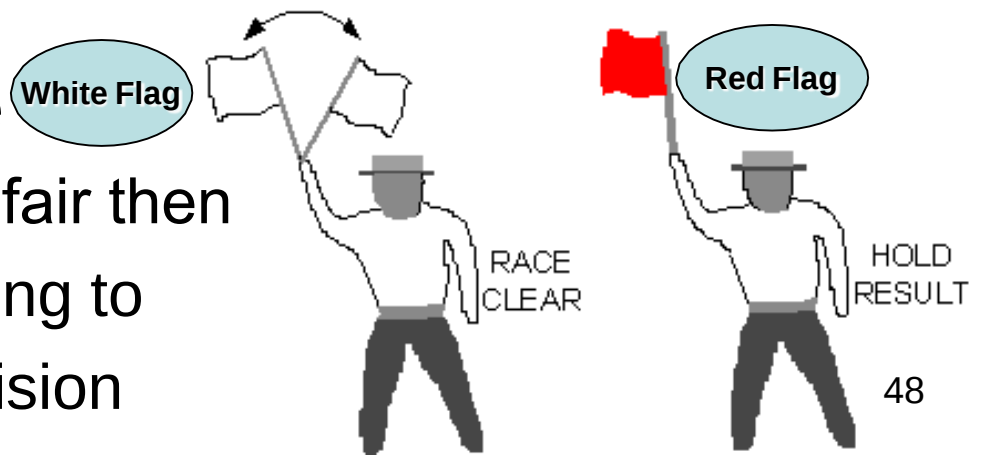
Umpire – Stopping a race

If a fair race is not possible (anywhere)

- Stop the race by waving red flag
- Sound the siren/bell
- Call out **Stop Rowing**
- Cannot restart race halfway down course except for boat race
- Either restart immediately or check with PoJ for a new start time

Umpire at Finish

- Look out for medical conditions
- Wait 10 to 15 seconds to determine if objection is raised
 - Ascertain the reason for the objection (listen to the crew and do not assume)
 - Uphold or overrule
 - Advise crew of decision
 - Consult with relevant officials should that be required
 - Advise PoJ of the decision (Never ask PoJ for advice)
- If no objection but umpire believes the race wasn't fair then raise red flag before talking to crews and making a decision



Pilot

- Need to be early to get boat on water
- Ensure safety equipment is on board
 - 2 life jackets, paddle, bailer
 - stopwatch
 - Life-saving torpedo or other flotation to assist crews in the water
- Take a backup time if possible (especially for heats)
- Be careful of wake
 - Go up **middle of the** course at full speed
 - Complete stop 300 to 500m ahead of oncoming race
 - Idle slowly off course and wait for race to pass



Pilot

- **Umpire's second pair of eyes and hands**
- Look out for obstacles and traffic violations
- Keep away from Buoys
- Keep an eye on the crews during the progression of the race and inform Umpire of concerns
- Observe all “hand signal requests” from Umpire
- Listen to the radio should umpire be called

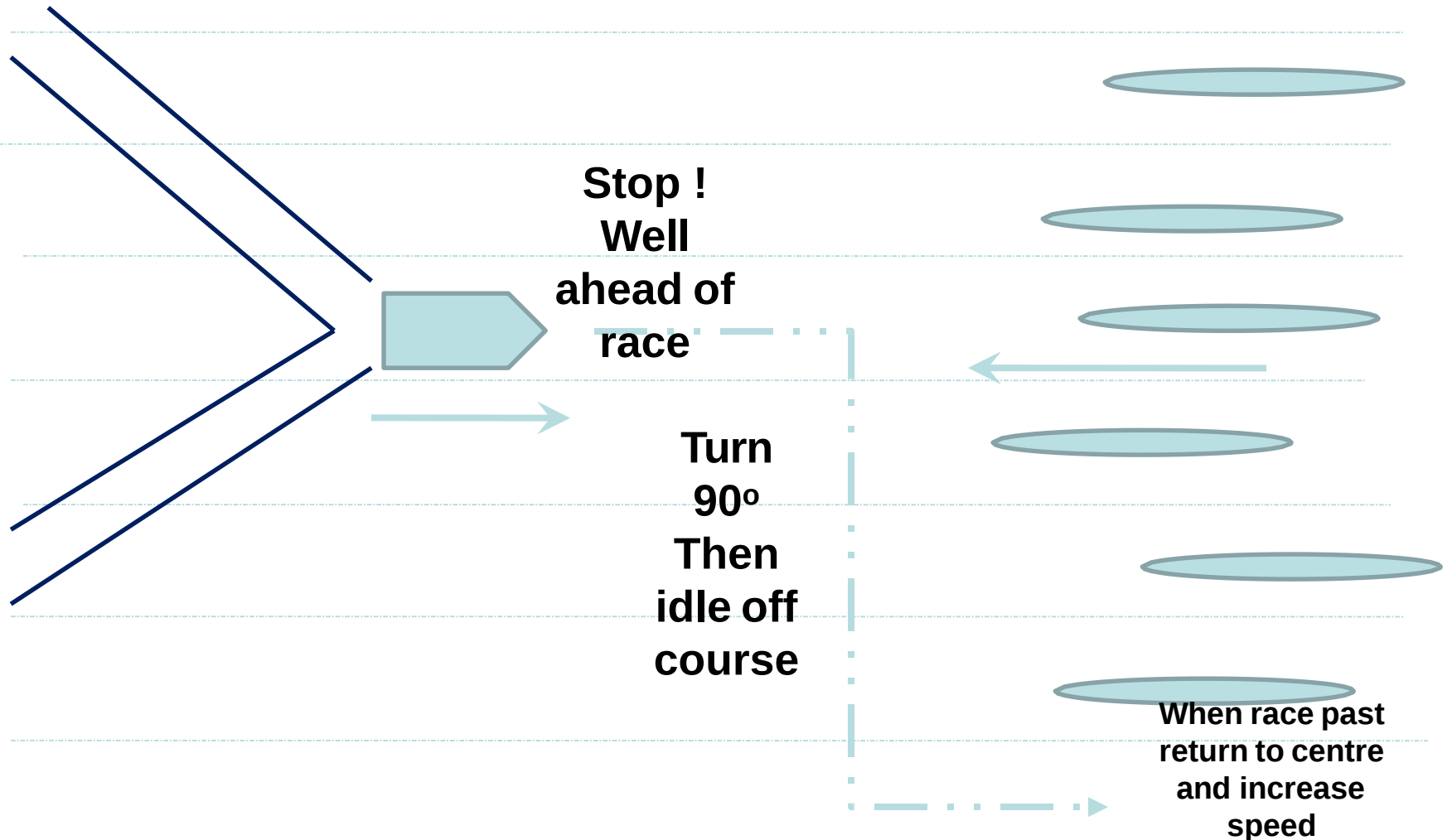
Umpire's Pilot Radio Procedures

- In control of radio at start of race
- Announce race: Race number, crew status (all present, scratchings, DNS, Yellow Cards) and umpire name and number, change over to channel 2
- Announce again on channel 2
- If aligning is taking a lot of time:
 - Announce “Stand down” when aligning has cause for delay
 - Announce “Flag Up” when start is eminent again
- Hold radio open to transmit start to Finish Tower

Basic Boat Piloting Skills

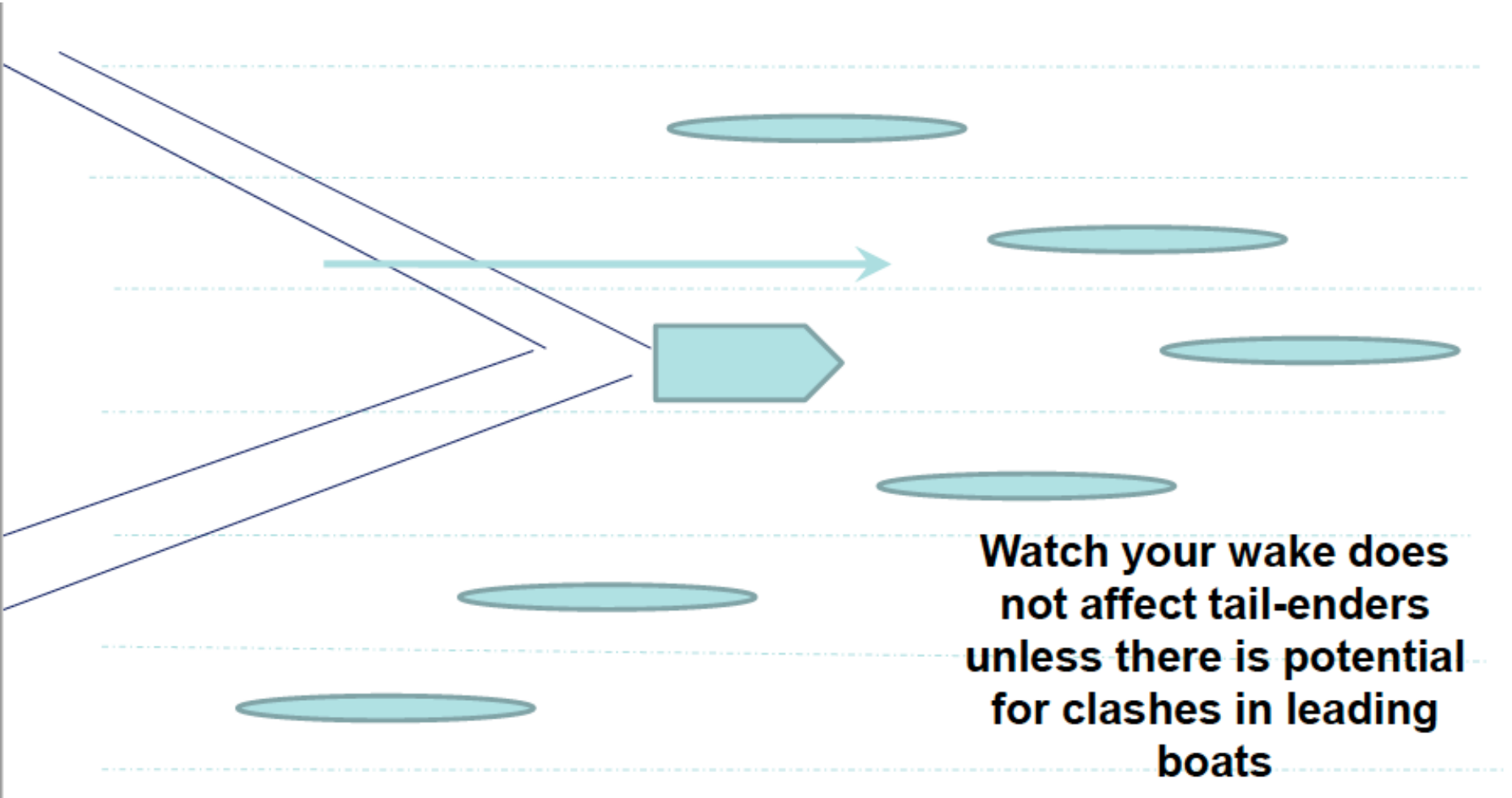
On the Water in General and in a Regatta

“How to approach an oncoming race”



Basic Boat Piloting Skills

Position when following a race



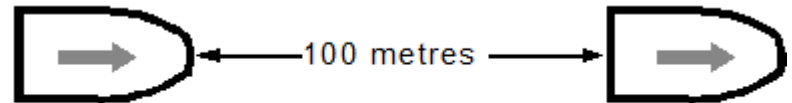
Basic Boat Piloting Skills

Boating Principles

When two boats encounter each other head-on both pilots should steer to starboard (right).



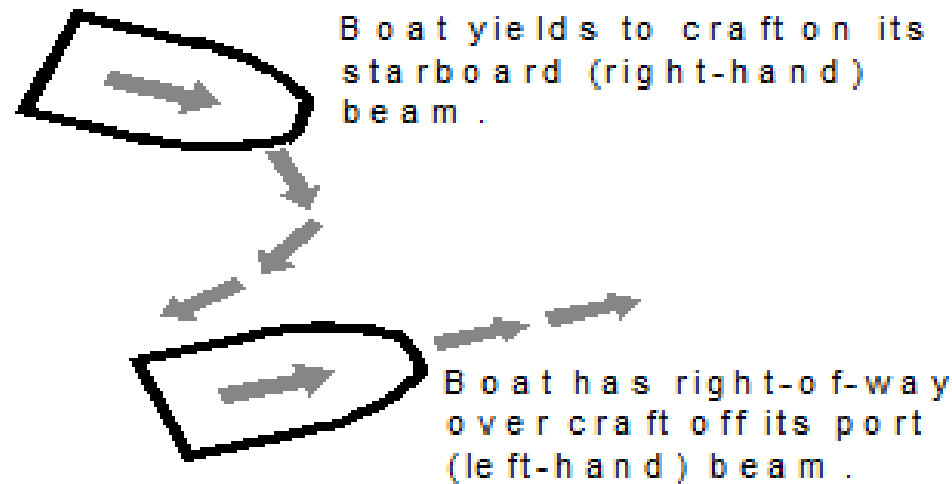
The minimum following distance between two motor boats travelling in the same direction is 100 m.



Basic Boat Piloting Skills

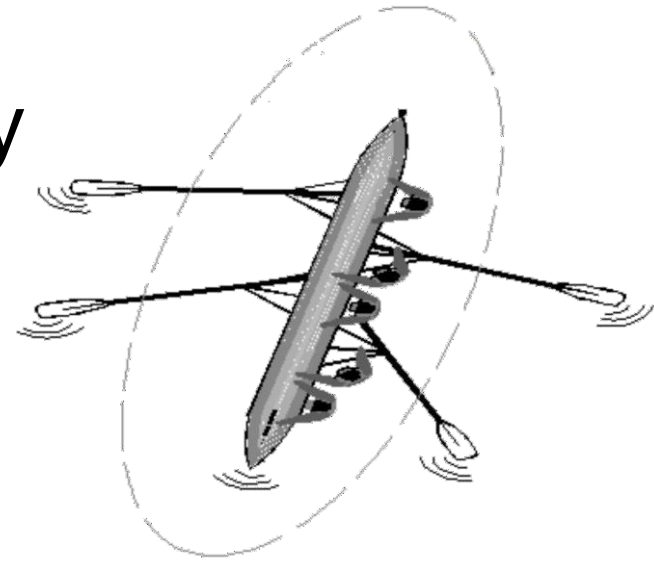
Boating Principles - 2

When two boats are on a diagonal collision course, the collision avoidance protocol is as illustrated



Capsized rowing boat

- Notify rescue
- Count the heads! Ensure all rowers are OK
- Abandon your race
- Attend to rescue if necessary
- Approach carefully
- Disengage propeller
- Dive in if necessary
- Use umpire's boat to stabilise rowing boat while crew gets in



Objection at end of race

- Raised hand to indicate to umpire
- Hand should be kept up until noticed
- The umpire will make a decision on the water and communicate with PoJ

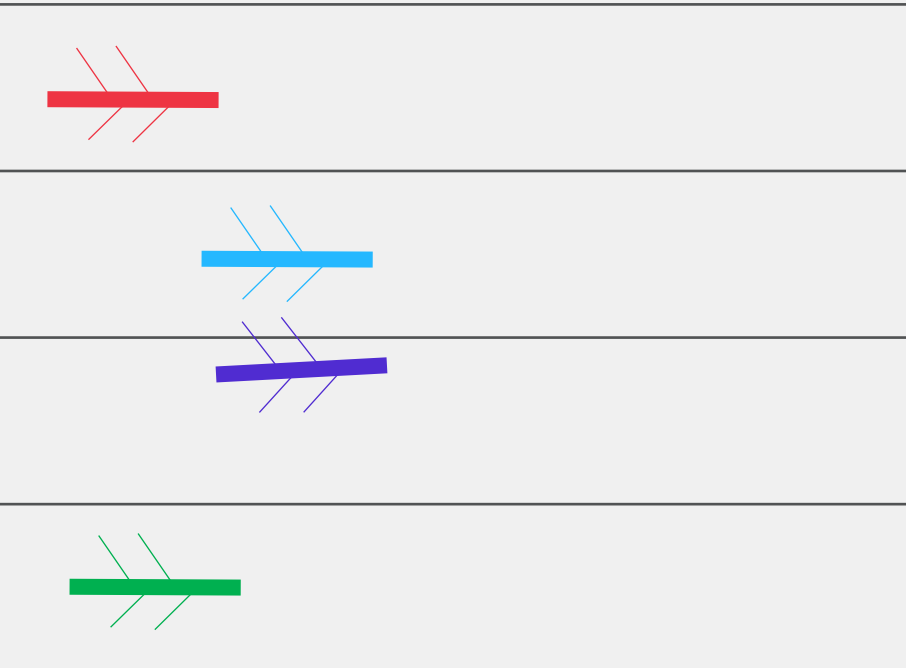


Penalties



- Reprimand
- Warning (yellow card)
 - Valid for upcoming race only
 - Will still apply if race is re-rowed
 - Violation of traffic rules, late at start, dress code
- Exclusion (red card) - removed from event
 - Late at start, two yellow cards, clashes during race
- Disqualification - removal of crew from all events
 - Flagrant or intentional violation of rules
 - False declaration of name, classification or club membership
- Relegation to last place
 - Underweight boat

Rules of Racing



What is likely to happen?

What should purple do?

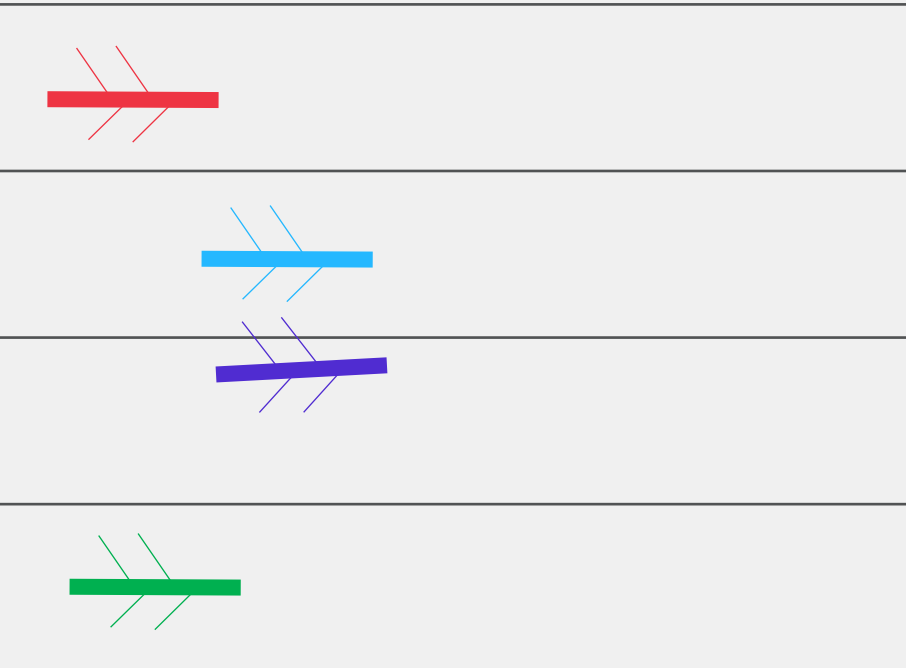
What can the umpire do?

Purple stop rowing!

Analysis of an incident

- Has a crew been disadvantaged?
 - No → regular race
- Has the disadvantage affected the ranking of the obstructed crew?
 - No → confirm the result
- Exclude the offending crew - Does this exclusion restore chances of obstructed crew?
 - Yes → confirm the result
- Re-row those crews whose ranking has been affected

Blue and Purple clash



What happens if finish order is:

- Purple, Blue, Red, Green?
- Green, Purple, Blue, Red?
- Green, Red, Purple, Blue?
- Blue, Purple, Green, Red?

Bottom line:

- Purple should avoid a clash at all costs

Questions?

Thank you for attending

