2026 Atlanta Dragon Boat Festival Inc.

Rules & Regulations

Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival – Atlanta

1. Rule of Construction

The following rules shall be read and interpreted consistently with each other and shall be read and interpreted to foster the purpose of fair competition and sportsmanship.

2. Definitions

For the purpose of these Rules and Regulations the following terms will be used:

2.1 "Event Organizer" is defined as the Atlanta Dragon Boat Festival Inc. Inc.

2.2 "**Chief Race Official**" is defined as the race official, appointed by the Event Organizer, who supervises and observes each heat, records the order of finish at the finish line for each heat, decides all valid protests regarding race conduct, and is the ultimate interpreter of the Rules and Regulations in conjunction with the Event Organizer whenever necessary.

2.3 "**Race Officials**" is defined as the committee that includes the Chief Race Official, umpires, starters, and the Race Controller, who are appointed by the Event Organizer.

2.4 "**Starters**" is defined as the race officials, appointed by the Event Organizer, who controls the conduct of the teams and crew members at the start line, brings the teams to the start line, and calls the start of each heat.

2.5 "**Umpires**" is defined as the race officials, appointed by the Event Organizer, who follow the boats down the racing course and record and violations of the Rules and Regulations during the course of any given heat.

2.6 "**Race Controller**" is defined as the race official, appointed by the Event Organizer, who hears all protests about race conduct and provides guidance to the Chief Race Official and other race officials when necessary.

2.7 "**Crew**" shall mean any active group of paddlers, drummer, steersperson, team captain, and team manager which has completed a team roster. The term "crew" is used interchangeable with the term "team" in the Rules and regulations.

2.8 "**Crew Member**" is defined as any person affiliated with a team aboard a dragon boat during official practices or races.

2.9 "**Paddler**" is defined as an active and valid crew member whose specific task is to propel the boat with a single bladed paddle, and who completed a mandatory waiver, is listed on the team roster, and must comply with other mandatory rules enforced in the event.

2.10 "**Steersperson**" is defined as an active and valid crew member whose specific task is to steer and maneuver a dragon boat with a steering oar, and who has completed a mandatory waiver and is listed on a team roster, and must comply with other mandatory rules enforced in the event. A "guest" steersperson may be used by any given team as long as that steersperson has completed a waiver and their presence is reported to the Chief Race Official prior to any heat they participate in.

2.11 "**Drummer**" is defined as an active and valid crew member whose specific task is to beat the drum attached to the bow of the dragon boat, and who has completed a mandatory waiver and is listed on a team roster, and must comply with other mandatory rules enforced in the event.

2.12 "**Team Captain**" is defined as an active crew member who represents a crew and also races for the crew. Team Captains may double as the Team Manager also.

2.13 "**Team Manager**" is defined as an active crew member who represents a crew and may or may not race for the crew.

3. General

3.1 Any crew that fails to observe the Rules and Regulations herein may be disqualified.

3.2 A limited number of credentials will be issued to each crew. These are for the use of the crew and its officials and are not to be used by other persons.

3.3 Each crew must have a Team Manager who must be present in the Crew Assembly Area during the time that the crew is under control of the Race Officials. The Team Manager will be responsible for the liaison with the Race Officials and will represent the crew at ceremonies.

3.4 Each team must submit a Team Registration Form with their entry fee.

3.5 Entry fees will be assessed as follows: (**Note**—See www.dragonboatatlanta.com for entry fees and amenities associated with each entry fee level.) Registration is non-refundable.
3.6 The Event Organizer reserves the right to refuse entry to any crew in the race at its sole discretion.
3.7 All matters not specifically addressed in the "Rules and Regulations" will be determined, at its sole discretion, by the Event Organizer.
3.8 Unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated and the Event Organizer may suspend teams from competition.
3.9 The Event Organizer reserves the right to seek legal action against any team or crew member for damages caused by failing to follow the Rules and Regulations or negligent or wrongful acts or omissions.
3.10 The Event Organizer reserves the right to waive, amend or add to any of the Rules and Regulations.

4. Safety

4.1 Crew Members must be able to swim 100 meters wearing light clothing. It is the responsibility of the organization, the Team Captain/Team Manager, or the individual entering a crew to make sure that all members of the crew comply with this rule.
4.2 Each crew member is solely responsible for his or her own safety during practice sessions and the race itself.
4.3 Personal Flotation Devices (PFD's) will be provided to all crew members and must be worn in the proper manner at all times while in the dragon boat.
4.4 These rules concerning safety should not be construed as authority over and above requirements necessitated by regulatory agencies. 4.5 In the event of capsize or swamping of the boat, crew members are required to remain with the boat until rescue boats arrive and then follow instructions from the rescue boat.
4.6 At no time shall crew members jump from the dragon boat. Such action may result in disqualification of the offending crew.
4.7 Lightning – In the event of lightning on the course, there shall be one long air horn blast from the tower and the display of a red flag to be repeated by the starter/aligner. All competitors will immediately return to launch docks and exit the boats.

5. Waivers

5.1 All crew members must sign a waiver stating that they have read the conditions of the waiver and are aware of the risks associated with Dragon Boat racing, and thus accept and waive any right or course of action they may have against the Event Organizer, sponsors, supporters or any organization connected with the event for injury or death to person(s) or loss/damage to personal property.
5.2 All crew members must sign and return waivers to the Event Organizer prior to the period covering all practice sessions and for race activities. The entire team's collection of waivers should be gathered up by the Team Captain or Manager for turn in to the Event Organizer.
5.3 Practices will not be granted to any team during the official practice session period from August to September until the waivers have been received.
5.4 No person shall enter a crew position as a substitute paddler without presenting a signed waiver.

6. The Crew and Crew Composition

6.1 Each 20-seat boat may carry up to 20 paddlers; drummers and steerspersons are not considered paddlers for the count of 20. Each 10-seat boat may carry up to 10 paddlers; drummers and steerspersons are not considered paddlers for the count of 10.
6.2 A paddler shall be registered with only one team.
6.3 Only crew members listed on the team roster shall be permitted to race on the team. Reserve (substitute) crew members should be listed on the team roster. Up to four reserves may be listed for 20 seat boats, 2 reserves may be listed for 10 seat boats.
6.4 Each crew must have a minimum of twelve (16) paddlers for 20 seat boats and six (8) paddlers for 10 seat boats.
6.5 In the OPEN—Mixed Division each 20-seat boat may carry up to 20 paddlers and will have a minimum of 16 paddlers. Each 20-seat boat must also carry at least eight (8) female paddlers, one (1) drummer (male or female), and one (1) steersperson (male or female). Each 10-seat boat must carry at least four (4) female paddlers, one (1) drummer (male or female), and one (1) steersperson (male or female).

6.6 In the BREAST CANCER Division each 20-seat boat may carry up to 20 paddlers and will have a minimum of 14 paddlers who are breast cancer survivors
6.7 In the ALL CANCER Division each 20-seat boat may carry up to 20 paddlers and all competitors including paddlers, helm and drummer must be ACP.
6.8 In the SENIOR C OPEN-MIXED Division competitors age satisfies the requirements of 60+. The only exception to the age requirements is for the drummer who can be younger but must be at least 12 years of age in the year of competition.
6.9 In the SENIOR D OPEN-MIXED Division competitors age satisfies the requirements of 70+. The only exception to the age requirements is for the drummer who can be younger but must be at least 12 years of age in the year of competition.

7. Marshalling, Embarking and Proceeding to the Start

7.1 A team must assemble in the Crew Assembly Area and be ready to board 20 minutes before the time of its race. The Marshals and Officials have the right to pull any team member who appears to be intoxicated. This is for the safety of all competitors, fellow team members, volunteers and officials. Our Event Insurance also calls for this action. Wrist bands will be checked at marshalling.
7.2 A crew must follow the directions of the Race Officials from the time it is called to the Crew Assembly/Marshalling Area.
7.3 A crew must board the specified dragon boat for their heat in accordance with the instructions given by Race Officials.
7.4 A crew is not permitted to choose which dragon boat to use and must use the boat assigned by Race Officials.
7.5 Each boat is assigned to a lane in which it is to race. A crew must race in its assigned lane.
7.6 After a crew has boarded it must leave the dock area and immediately proceed to the starting area without interfering with any heat in progress.
7.7 No boat shall exceed 100 meters behind the start line while preparing to race.

8. Starting Procedure

8.1 A crew in the starting area must obey the instructions of the Starter, Judges and other Race Officials under the control of the Starter.
8.2 A crew shall not at any time enter into the race course area to get to its assigned starting lane.
8.3 A crew must take up its correct position in the starting area in the lane assigned to it. It is the responsibility of the team and not the Judge to maintain its correct position before the start.
8.4 When the Starter is satisfied that the crews are properly aligned the Starter will alert all crews by raising the horn and giving the verbal warning "Attention!" After a 3-4 second pause a signal will be sounded to signify the start of the race. The signal will be identified on race day to the Team Captains/Managers. It will either be a **tone**, a **verbal command of "Go"** sounded over a bull horn/PA system, a **start gun**, or an **air horn**.
8.5 It is the responsibility of each team captain to make sure that each crew member is familiar with the starting procedure. The starting signal is the tone, blast from the horn or the verbal command of "Go."
8.6 In the event that the Starter considers that any crew has started before the start signal is sounded, two tones or horns will be sounded in quick succession and the starter/aligner will raise a red flag to signify a false start and all crews must return immediately to the start. The race will be restarted. The Starter will issue a warning to any crew that causes a false start.
8.7 Any crew that fails to return after a false start or that causes two false starts may be disqualified.
8.8 If a crew is not ready when the Starter warns "Attention!" the drummer must fully extend both arms above the drummer's head to attract the Starter's attention. No crew will be permitted to take such action in any other circumstances.
8.9 In the event of a crew experiencing some sort of catastrophic malfunction after the race has started and up to fifty (50) meters, the race shall be restarted provided the affected crew stops paddling immediately and both the paddlers and the drummer fully extend their arms above their heads. The Starter or the Umpire shall then raise a red flag and sound the horn twice, at which point, all crews must return to the start line for a restart.
8.10 It is the responsibility of the team captain to make sure that each team member is familiar with the starting procedures before the start of all races.

8.11 Penalties

8.11.a Any crew that causes two (2) false starts shall be excluded from competing in the re-race.
8.11.b Any crew that fails to immediately return to the start line after the Starter has called a false start shall be excluded from competing in the re-race.
8.11.c Any conduct by a crew that gives a crew a material advantage in the opinion of the race officials violating Rule 8.6 may be assigned a false start penalty. A two-second time penalty may be assessed in lieu of disqualification. The Chief Race Official will have the discretion to award this penalty.

9.Race Conduct

9.1 The proper course for each boat is a straight line from its starting position to a corresponding point on the finish line. Each boat must remain in its allocated lane and may not interfere with other boats.
9.2 In the event of a boat failing to keep its proper course and thereby interfering with the course of another boat which is on its proper course, or in the event of a collision between two or more boats, the Race Official may, after consultation with other Race Officials, disqualify the offending boat or boats or order one or more boats to re-race the race, or both, where, in the Race Official's opinion, the result of the race has been materially affected.
9.3 Crews may be disqualified if they cross over the racing lane makers or impede other racing crews on the water which materially affects the results of the race.
9.4 If, in the opinion of the Race Officials, a boat has been swamped or capsized deliberately by the crew, the Event Organizer reserves the right to disqualify and refuse such crew's entry into future races. A monetary penalty of up to $500.00 may also be imposed.
9.5 If, in the opinion of the Race Official, after consultation with other Race Officials, a boat is damaged deliberately by the crew, the Event Organizer reserves the right to impose a penalty of up to $15,000.00 on the organization entering the crew. The Event Organizer also reserves the right to require such organization to pay for the costs of repairs to the damaged boat.

10.Races

10.1 The race lengths and Categories/Divisions allowed into them are as follows:
200 meters All Categories/Divisions will race
10.2 Order of Races:
The **200-meter races** will consist of three events: two heats in the morning and an afternoon final. Each team entered will race in the two heats. The fastest race time from the two heats will determine their placement in the afternoon finals. Only the top 10 teams overall in 20 seats will race in the Grand Final. The top 4 teams overall in 10 seats will race in a Mini-Grand Final.
The time from the final races will determine the team's place within their division and their overall standing.

These Rules and Regulations are reviewed and updated after each festival. They are our rules derived from years of festivals and common dragon boat rules. Last update July 27, 2026.