

Canoe Poling

Rules for Slalom and Wildwater Competition

(Revised 2009)

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These rules were written for the purpose of equally testing the artistry as well as the speed and power of the canoe poler, thus developing poling to the highest degree possible and adding to the repertory of the all around canoeist. They were first written in 1965, and revised in 1968, 1974, 1981, 1987, 1989, 2006, 2008 and 2009 with the help of many of our country's top polers.

Competition Rules

Description of Canoe Poling Competition

There are two events in Canoe Poling competition. (1) Slalom racing and (2) Wildwater racing. Both events are timed with the overall objective to obtain the quickest time with the fewest penalty points. Both events must include up and down river sections.

I. Slalom Events

- A. **General Description-** The course is marked by buoys which define the course the poler must follow. The course is designed to demonstrate the poler's skill in performing certain maneuvers and proficiency at poling technique with maximal speed. The Open (see description of classes) course must be different and more challenging than the Intermediate and Masters Course which may be the same but recommended to be different. Each contestant gets to run the course twice, the official score being the best of the two times plus penalty points. A Poler may elect to do just one run and use that score.
- B. **Course Description-** From the starting line the course may proceed either up or down river but will be set in such a way that the finishing line is the same as the starting line. The start-finish line may also be in the middle of the course with a loop above and a loop below. The poler must navigate around the buoys which mark the extreme upriver and downriver portions of the course. An intermediate or masters course should be completed in three to six minutes by the majority of the contestants. An open course should run between five and ten minutes. Course conditions permitting and depending on the number of contestants entered two contestants may be on the course at the same time. This may be accomplished by staggering the start so they will not interfere with each other. There should be at least two reverse buoys (see description), one circle buoy, one left and one right eddy turn buoy and a cross river ferry.
- C. **Watercourse Description-** Water conditions may vary depending on location and river levels. One of the attributes of poling is that it is very adaptable to the conditions at hand and the course may be set accordingly. Ideally the water depth may range from five inches to six feet and occasionally more. The

Intermediates and Masters may have class I & II rapids. The Open may have class II & III rapids.

- D. **Setting the Course-** The course is usually set by the race organizer or designate. If because of numbers and experience, participants must set the course this should be done by committee with the organizer having final approval of the course. The course may be set up as much as a day in advance but it is important that no competitor be allowed on the course when all the buoys are placed in their final position. Practice is permitted at the race site up till the racers meeting (see section VIII). If desired and agreed on by the intermediate racers at the racers meeting, a demonstration run may be made by a poler not entered in the intermediate class. The Intermediate contestants may observe from shore or in their boats on the water. There is no such demonstration for the Open class or the Masters class. A map should be available at the racers meeting to help clarify the course.
- E. **Buoy description and Navigation-** Below is a general description of the meaning of the various colored buoys. Because river conditions vary and it is sometimes difficult to place a buoy in the exact preferred location the race organizer at the racers meeting will review the meaning of the buoys, clarify interpretation and define any variations of judging a buoy as it pertains to that particular race. The organizer or designate will also review the course, define the up & down river buoys and the order in which the buoys are run. A buoy has been navigated when the entire canoe passes the buoy. A proper navigation is determined by a buoy judge and should be within one standard canoe lengths (18 ft). Once a buoy has been navigated either properly or improperly, it is considered dead and may not be re-navigated.
1. Red buoys must be navigated to the right (with the buoy nearest to the poler's heart or on the poler's left) with the bow passing before the stern and the poler facing the designated bow.
 2. Green buoys must be navigated to the left (on the poler's right) with the bow passing before the stern and the poler facing the designated bow.
 3. White buoys are circle buoys and the poler's whole canoe must completely circumnavigate by 360 degrees the buoy. This may be done in any direction with the poler facing or positioned in any direction. What is important is that the entry course is crossed by the entire canoe before leaving the buoy (tying the knot).
 4. Red and white striped buoys are reverse right buoys. The buoy must be navigated to the right (the buoy on the poler's left) with the stern passing before the bow while the poler faces the bow.
 5. Green and white striped buoys are reverse left buoys. The buoy must be navigated to the left (on the poler's right) with the stern passing before the bow while the poler faces the bow.

6. Red top-green bottom buoys signify right of eddy in (eddy is on poler's left) left of eddy out (poler now facing up-river eddies out on the same side entered) with the poler facing the bow. The canoe must come in the eddy but does not have to repass the buoy going out of the eddy.
 7. Green top-red bottom buoys signify left of eddy in (eddy is on poler's right) right of eddy out (poler now facing up-river eddies out on the same side entered) with the poler facing the bow. The canoe must come in the eddy but does not have to repass the buoy going out of the eddy.
- F. **Start and Finish**-The order of contestants is determined by the polers last performance in that particular prior event. The prior winner poles first, second starts second, etc. Any new polers start after the polers who competed the previous year. The order is determined by random assignment. If there are no objections consideration may be given to avoid back to back races for those polers entered in other events. The order of the second run is the same as the first. At the start of the race the poler is poised at the starting line with the bow behind the line the canoe at a stand still in the water. The head timer checks to see that the poler is ready then counts down "5-4-3-2-1-GO!" and the race is on. At the finish the head timer shouts "MARK!" when the bow crosses the finish line and time is stopped.
- G. **Penalties**
1. 50 penalty points (seconds) will be given when a poler fails to navigate a buoy properly as defined above. Once the canoe passes the buoy it is considered dead, if passed improperly it may not be re-navigated.
 2. 10 penalty points (seconds) will be given if a poler navigates a buoy properly but touches the buoy with any part of the canoe, pole or body. Only 10 points can be added per buoy. Once a buoy is navigated it is considered dead and no further points can be added.
 3. A maximum of 50 points may be given per buoy.
- H. **Did Not Finish (DNF)**- A DNF is not a disqualification from the race but the forfeiture of a score for that run. The poler is given a DNF if:
1. The poler accidentally or intentionally falls or steps out of the canoe with both feet. The poler is permitted to hold onto rocks, boulders, trees, or other "outside" objects as long as he or she remains in the canoe with one foot.
 2. The poler is not at the starting line at the designated time.
 3. The run exceeds the allotted maximum time as defined in the racers meeting.
 4. The poler uses a paddle. The poler may carry extra poles and use them if a pole is lost. The poler may also hand paddle the canoe to recover a pole or cross the finish line.
 5. The upper and lower most buoys on the course are not navigated and or the poler does not cross the finish line.

6. The poler does not attend the pre-race meeting (VIII).

- I. **Timing and Scoring-** The time is kept by three people with three separate stop watches. The median time is the official time and is recorded in hundredths of seconds. The penalty points are added to the total seconds and this becomes the official score. The lowest score of the two runs is the official and final score. For the Masters Class, the final score in seconds will be reduced by 1% for each year older than fifty the competitor is on January 1st of that year. The winner being the racer with the lowest score.
- J. **Judging-** At the racers meeting buoy judges will be assigned. These may be contestants who are not racing at that time. The buoy judge must relay a penalty immediately by an arm signal to the scorer. A 50 point penalty is signaled by raising both arms. A 10 point penalty is signaled by raising one arm. Judges should also record the racers # and the penalty on the designated form.
- K. **Repeat Run** may be allowed if:
 - 1. There is interference from other people on the river and it is agreed upon by the protest committee.
 - 2. An appeal is made and upheld by the protest committee.
- L. **Rescue & Safety-** At the end of the run each racer who just completed the course must act as a spotter and be ready for rescue by remaining in their canoe behind the starting line until replaced by the next racer completing the course.

II. **Wildwater Events**

- A. **General description-** This is a race against time, to see how fast the poler can go up and down river. The poler can choose the route on the river as long as he completes the course.
- B. **Course description-** The course is marked by a starting and finishing line which are the same. There may be one upriver buoy and one down-river buoy which are the course markers (any color may be used). If the start-finish line is between two buoys the poler may elect which direction to start. The poler chooses whatever course to take but must go around the buoys. This is not a circle buoy as defined in slalom and does not require a full 360 degree circle but the entire canoe must pass around the buoy. The bow of the canoe must cross the finish line before the stern. The length of the course may vary depending on water conditions and number of contestants, it should be set so that the course may be completed by most of the contestants within two to ten minutes. The Open class should be longer than the Intermediate and Masters and should include heavier water if possible.
- C. **Watercourse Description-** Same as the Slalom (Section I.C.)
- D. **Setting the Course-** The buoys are set by the race organizer or designate as close to the start of the race as practical. Participants are allowed on the river up until the racers meeting and the start of the race. There is no demonstration run.

- E. **Start and Finish-** Same as Slalom (Section I.F.)
- F. **Penalties-** There is a 10 second penalty for touching the turnaround buoy.
- G. **Did Not Finish-** A DNF is not a disqualification from the race but the forfeiture of the score for that race. The poler is given a DNF if:
 - 1. The poler does not complete the course or go around the buoys.
 - 2. The poler is not at the starting line at the designated time.
 - 3. The poler uses a paddle. The poler may carry extra poles with them if a pole is lost. The poler may also hand paddle the canoe to recover a pole or cross the finish line.
 - 4. The poler advances his forward progress outside the canoe. Unlike slalom if the poler falls out or steps out of the canoe he may continue to race. The poler may even empty water out of the canoe and continue.
 - 5. The run exceeds the allotted maximum time as defined in the racers meeting.
 - 6. The bow does not cross the finish line before the stern.
 - 7. The poler does not attend the pre-race meeting (VIII).
- H. **Timing and Scoring-** The time is kept by three people with three separate stop watches. The median time is the official time and is recorded in hundredths of seconds. In wildwater the poler gets only one run and the score is the elapsed time plus any penalty points for hitting the turnaround buoy. For the Masters Class, the final score in seconds will be reduced by 1% for each year older than fifty the competitor is on January 1st of that year.
- I. **Repeat Run-** Same as Slalom (Section I.K.)

III. Disqualification from an event or entire race

- A. If a contestant intentionally strikes or hinders the progress of another contestant in any way.
- B. If a contestant knowingly violates the rules or attempts to win an event in an irregular manner as judged by the race officials.
- C. For unsportsmanlike conduct as judged by the race officials.
- D. If a contestant is on the course other than for activities associated with the rescue and recovery while a race is in progress.

IV. Appeals

- A. All appeals must be made in writing, must be accompanied with \$5.00 (to be returned if appeal is upheld) and given to the poling chairman or race organizer and his committee within 45 minutes of the contestant's run in question, and no later than ten minutes prior to any awards presentation.
- B. Protest Committee decisions may be appealed to the National Poling Committee.
- C. Race Committee decisions may be appealed to the Protest Committee.
- D. The Protest Committee will consist of four or six knowledgeable individuals selected or appointed by the poling chairman (or race organizer). A simple majority vote on any appeal is binding. A tie vote will be settled by the National

Poling Chairman (an exofficio member of the Protest Committee). If a committee member is involved in the appeal he will not vote on that issue. If the National Poling Chairman is involved in an appeal and there is a tie vote of the committee the appeal will be denied.

V. Contestants

- A. Must register prior to race and complete entry form.
- B. Pay any required fees prior to racing.
- C. Be and American Canoe Association Member
- D. Be willing to help conduct the race by acting as buoy judges, setting up and taking down the course, acting as rescue spotters etc., all under the supervision of the race organizer.
- E. Act in a sportsmanlike way with respect to fellow competitors and environment.

VI. Classes of Competition

The following classes will be held if numbers permit. Except for the Open there must be at least three contestants entered to make a class and award trophies. If there are not enough contestants to make a class they will be combined by the following formula: Juniors will race with Intermediates, Women will race with Intermediates, all classes may be combined with Open. If Juniors and Intermediates are forced to race in Open because of insufficient entries they shall not jeopardize their status for the coming year if they place in the Open.

- A. **Open**- any contestant of either sex and of any age. This is the top class and the one which determines the national champion.
- B. **Intermediate**- Any contestant who has not won this class or placed in the top three of the open in a National Championships before.
- C. **Masters**- Any contestant who is 40 years old prior to January 1st of that year.
- D. **Women**- Any female competitor
- E. **Junior**- Any contestant who is under 18 years of age on January 1st of that year.
- F. Additional classes may be provided for if included in the announcement for the National Championships of that year. Such classes will be offered on a trial basis the first year, if during ensuing years there are fewer than three contestants the class will be dropped.

VII. Equipment

- A. Poles may be made of any material. They may be of any length. The pole, pole shoe, and sleeves must not exceed two inches in diameter.
- B. Pole sleeves or shoes may be attached to both ends of the pole and may be of any type of material.
- C. Pole points may be attached to both ends of the pole and may be metal, nylon, wood, or any other material.
- D. Paddles are permitted in the canoe, but if used during a race will result in a DNF for the contestant.
- E. Spare poles may be carried and used during a race.

- F. Canoe- Standard type cruising canoes, also known as “Canadians” will in almost all instances meet the specifications. The highest point of all cross sections of the canoe shall not be higher than a straight line drawn between the highest points of the stem and stern. The maximum depth measured within one foot of the center length will be 15 inches. Gunwales may not extend out more than 1.5 inches. Decks may not exceed 36 inches in length: the coaming height may not exceed one inch. Floatation is permitted under allowable decks as outlined in the *1980 Open Canoe Whitewater Rules*. The canoe may be made of any material.

VIII. Pre-Race Meeting

The National Poling Chairman (or the race organizer, in the absence of the National Chairman), or a designate shall call a meeting of the contestants prior to the start of the event to:

- A. Review the course and display a map of the course if available.
- B. Define and clarify any variations in the standard navigation of buoys as it pertains to that event.
- C. Announce the maximum allotted time the course must be completed to avoid a DNF.
- D. Review buoy judging assignments.
- E. Introduce the Protest Committee.
- F. Answer any questions, clarify rules and procedures.
- G. Review the starting order of contestants,
- H. State when the next poler must be at the starting line (usually by the time the proceeding poler finishes his run).

IX. Safety

- A. All contestants must have knowledge of all safety regulations and procedures adopted by the American Canoe Association, the United States Canoe Association, and the safety code published by the American Whitewater Affiliation prior to entry into a poling event.
- B. All contestants must wear life jackets.
- C. Protective head gear is also recommended.
- D. Rescue takes precedence over all other activity.
- E. When a racer completes a run they are responsible to remain in their canoe and spot for the next racer until relieved in turn.

X. Awards

- A. Awards must not exceed the value established by the American Canoe Association rules.
- B. All Awards will be given at an awards ceremony which will take place after all racing is completed, the race site is disbanded and cleaned up.
- C. All perpetual trophies are the property of the American Canoe Association National Poling Committee. Competing in any race for such trophies and winning them is with the understanding that the winner is responsible for their

care until they are passed on at the next year's race. If the prior year's winner cannot be present at the upcoming race he or she will forward the trophy to the next year's race organizer or the National Poling Chairman so it is present to be awarded at the race. The winner of the trophy is responsible for having their name engraved on the trophy in a manner similar to the previous winners.

1. **National Slalom Poling Cup-** Is awarded to the winner of the Open Slalom event at the National Championships.
2. **Combined Century Poling Cup-** Is awarded to the poler who has the best *combined sum place finish* in the Open Slalom and Open Wildwater at the National Championships. The *same* canoe must be used in both events. The best *combined sum place finish* is determined by assigning the number for the place finish of each event, then adding the two together. The lowest sum is the winner. For example 1st place is given 1, second place 2, third place 3, etc. Two first place finishes would give a combined sum of 2 and would automatically be the winner. A second in the Slalom and a third in the Wildwater would give a combined sum of 5. In the event of a tie of the *combined sum place finish* the lowest % change from first place is used to decide the winner. This is determined by calculating the total seconds score for each contestant, then determining the difference from first place. The percent change from first place is calculated (the difference divided by the 1st place score) to two decimal points and these percentages are added together for the Open Slalom and Wildwater. The contestant with the lowest combined % change from first place is the winner.
3. **Masters Lambert Poling Cup-** Is awarded to the best poler in the Masters Slalom and the Masters Wildwater at the National Championships. The *same* canoe must be used in both events. The winner is determined in the same manner as described for the Combined Century Cup.
4. **The New England Trophy-** Is awarded to the best poler living in New England who competes in the Open Slalom and Open Wildwater at the New England Division Championships. The *same* canoe must be used in both events. The winner is determined in the same manner as described for the Combined Century Cup.
5. **National Wildwater Cup-** Is awarded to the winner of the Open Wildwater event at the National Championships.
6. **Ed Hayden Poling Cup-** Is awarded to the best poler in the Intermediate Slalom and the Intermediate Wildwater at the National Championships. The *same* canoe must be used in both events. The winner is determined in the same manner as described for the Combined Century Cup.

XI. National Poling Committee

Meets at least once a year during the National Championships race weekend. It is chaired by the National Chairman and consists of the ACA division Chairmen and any ACA member interested in poling. Business that must be discussed and voted on at that meeting includes.

- A. Election of the National Poling Chairman.** Any ACA member who has poled at a National Championship race may vote. The National Poling Chairman should be an individual who:
1. Has actively been involved with poling the past year.
 2. Understands the sport and the rules of competitive poling.
 3. Is willing to promote canoe poling and attend the annual ACA national meeting.
 4. Help organize the National Championship race.
 5. Perform the duties of the National Chairman as described in the Canoe Poling Competition Rules.
 6. Receives a simple majority vote from members eligible to vote and who are present at the meeting.
- B. Award of the National Championship Regatta**
1. Is decided by a majority vote of the National Poling Committee.
 2. Voting members include the ACA Division Chairmen and any ACA member who has poled at the National Championship race and is present at the meeting.
 3. The voting for this should take place in the calendar year preceding the race and a discussion should take place of future sites. In the event that no site is determined by January of the same year the National Chairman may designate a site in consultation with the committee (Division Chairmen).
 4. Any surplus funds collected in association with the National Championship Race will be allocated to the National Poling Committee for operating expenses.
- C. Amendments to rules-** Rule changes and amendments will be discussed at the National Poling Committee meeting.
1. Proposals for rule changes should be submitted in writing to the National Chairman prior to the meeting. However other suggestions may be entertained from the floor.
 2. Any proposed change must be read by the National Chairman and discussed by the committee.
 3. Voting members for rule changes include the National Chairman, Division Chairmen, and any ACA member who has competed in at least two previous National Championship races within the past three years.

4. Prior to voting a count will be made of the voting members. A two-thirds majority is required for approval of a rule change or amendment. There must be at least four in favor votes to make a change.
5. The amended rules will take effect at the end of the calendar year.
6. The National Chairman or his designate is responsible to see that the Rules are updated after the National Meeting.

D. Any other business or issues concerning Canoe Poling

XII. Application of the Rules

The Rules as designated herein apply to the National Championship Regatta. It is recommended that all ACA Poling Races utilize these rules to the extent possible and practical. The National Chairman should maintain an updated copy. These rules are available to the Division Chairmen free of charge. A copy of the rules may be purchased for a fee which is used to help off set expenses of the National Poling Committee.

XIII. Enacting Clause

If approved by the National Poling Chairman and the Divisional Chairmen who have indicated that they will be at the National Race of 1987, these rules will take effect upon this approval.

These rules contain the changes voted upon by the National Poling Committee, July 11, 1987.

These rules contain the changes voted upon by the National Poling Committee, June 25, 1988.

These rules contain the changes voted upon by the National Poling Committee, June 3, 2006.

(Added Master's Handicap, Added National Wildwater Cup)

These rules contain the changes voted upon by the National Poling Committee May 29-31, 2008

(Changed number required for class from four to three)

These rules contain the changes voted upon by the National Poling Committee May 29, 2009 (Added the Ed Hayden Poling Cup)