

NORTHWEST ROWING COUNCIL
NORTHWEST MASTERS REGIONALS - PROPOSAL TO CHANGE FORMAT
Submitted by Lenny O'Donnell, NW Rowing Council Board, Masters Committee

PROPOSAL: To change the format of the NW Masters Regionals Regatta from a Heats and Finals format, as it is currently, to a "Finals Only" regatta, as is done at the Masters World Championships.

FINALS ONLY: HOW WOULD IT WORK?

Every event with over 7 entries will be divided by age into "Finals" rather than heats. They will be treated the same as Finals Only races with 7 or fewer competitors. The top three finishers in each "Final" receive a medal. This will result in an estimated gross increase in the number of medals awarded by about 200. It is recommended that the number of races per individual be capped at 5 in the initial registration, and then removed several days before the regatta to fill empty slots, as is currently done.

BACKGROUND: The NW Regionals is bursting at the seams, with very long race days. The number of participants in 2016 was over 1,000, and there is no room for expansion if the regatta continues to grow, which is very likely. There were 130 events with entries and 19 events offered with no entries (of these, 9 were LW, 8 were Adaptive, and 2 openweight 1x). 64 events had heats, and 66 were finals only. Just over half the regatta was already "finals only." There were 23 events with 4 or fewer entries; they are unlikely to expand to more than 7 but are important to retain to afford diverse racing opportunities.

As the NW Masters Regionals is not a qualification regatta, there is no reason that the most highly subscribed events can't have multiple "champions." What this actually creates are age subdivisions in the most popular events, so people will be competing against people closer to their exact age. It will also eliminate the need for handicaps in many of the "+" races for multiple age groups.

The 16 most popular events were full with 14 entries, resulting in rowers not being able to row in a preferred event. There is no room in the schedule to add additional heats for these popular events. The 31 next most popular events had 10 or more entries, and the number of slots in those are limited.

There are not sufficient referees in the region to officiate the regatta, and several must be flown in, which has caused cost increases. Additional new rules regarding referees will add a substantial additional cost to the regatta (days are limited to 8 a.m. – 6 p.m., the minimum number of referees required has been increased) and could possibly cause events to be canceled.

The regatta needs to create space in the schedule without reducing the race categories or limiting racing opportunities. The only way to do this would be to add races on Friday and Sunday, making those travel days even longer, or switch the format to Finals Only.

NUMBERS

If last year's regatta were run under this format, there would have been no more than 212 finals. There were 16 events with 14 entries, so this calculation includes one extra "final" in each of those events. Other events might have more entries because of this format, but there is room in the schedule to accommodate them. The daily breakdown is as follows:

FRIDAY: 36 events, 30 heats + 36 finals = 66 races. RACING TIME: 6 HOURS.

*This day on a finals only format would be about **5.25 HOURS, WITH 57 RACES.***

SATURDAY: 55 events, 64 heats + 55 finals = 119 races. RACING TIME: 11 HOURS.

*This day on a finals only format would be about **9 HOURS, WITH 95 RACES.***

SUNDAY: 39 Events, 36 heats + 39 finals = 75 races. RACING TIME 7.5 HOURS.

*This day on a finals only format would be about **6.25 HOURS, WITH 60 RACES.***

BENEFITS

- More medals! Rather than the measured strategy of heats, every race is a medal race, and every rower is competing for a medal every time they race.
- No heats! Most of us (but not all!) don't like races with heats. They make the day difficult to schedule, eliminate other events we would like to race in, and consume time and energy. Given the chance to row in 2 or 3 straight finals for medals and two heats and maybe 1 or 2 finals, which would you prefer?
- Shorter days and more predictable schedules.
- Increased opportunity to race in multiple events.
- Much easier to administrate.
- Reduction of handicapped races.
- Increased revenues to offset increased expenses (referees), so that USRowing fee increases can potentially be buffered.

ADDITIONAL RULES

There would need to be an absolute cap on the total number of races to keep at least some of the reduction in regatta hours. 220 is a likely cap (that would still be a 3 hour, 20 minute time gain overall). This could be first come, first served—as soon as the cap is triggered waiting lists would begin.

EVENTS

It is recommended that, if implemented for 2017, the events remain the same in order to be able to make an accurate comparison between the two formats after the 2017 regatta. Additional events could be added in subsequent years if there is room.