

2026 Dubuque Dragon Boat Festival

September 12 - 13, 2026



“Friendship through Paddling”



Introduction

This manual will make it easier for a team captain to prepare a team for the up-coming Dragon Boat Festival. The American Dragon Boat Association's motto "Friendship through Paddling" is evident throughout the festival. Our goal is to maintain the rich cultural traditions of the festival so people from all over the world can enjoy meeting each other with some friendly, exciting competition.

Deadline Dates

Final Payment	August 19, 2026
Team description information for program	August 19, 2026

Schedule of Events

2026 Dubuque Dragon Boat Festival

September 11, 12, 13

Dubuque, Iowa

Friday, September 11th

Miller-Riverview Park

Team Tent Set Up

Noon-7:00 P.M. Team Registration

Pick up wristbands and information packet at Camp Site #1

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Saturday, September 12th

Miller-Riverview Park

8:00 A.M. Awakening Of The Dragon

8:10 A.M. Captain's Meeting

8:20 A.M. Competition Begins

Sunday, September 13th

Miller-Riverview Park

8:20 A.M. Competition Begins

Awards to follow racing

“Friendship Through Paddling”

You are encouraged to persuade your team to participate in all festival activities. Each team is expected to help welcome all teams and show appreciation for their traveling to join us. Remember the "Friendship through Paddling" motto throughout the entire festival and get to know the other team members.

Forming a Team

1. Decide if you want a "just for fun" or a "highly competitive" team. Recruit team members accordingly.
2. Select your team captain and your class of competition.
3. Seek sponsorship and choose a name.
 - A. After August 19th, a team name cannot be changed.
4. All payment information will be sent out to team captains or given out at the captains meetings. This will include the dates that all payments are due, and deadlines for program information.

Practice Sessions

1. A dragon boat will be available in Dubuque for practices with your team. You can set up a time for your team practice at the captains meeting.
 - A. Allowable sessions by competition class:
All adult divisions will have 1 practice.
The Junior division will have 1 practice.
 - B. Identify if you need a sternsman or coach. No one will be allowed to practice without a certifiably proficient sternsman.
 - C. Turn in signed waiver forms for all team members to Jean McCallum prior to your first practice session. ***No one will be allowed in a boat without signing a waiver.***
 - D. A parent/guardian must also sign a waiver if a team member is under 18 years of age.
 - E. **Lifejackets are required on and fastened during all practice & race sessions. Inflatable lifejackets are NOT allowed.**
 - F. **No flip flops or bare feet in the boat. Shoes must have a back.**

Team Roster

1. All teams must turn in a completed roster **one week prior to the festival**. Please email to dubuquedragonboat1988@gmail.com.
2. The team captain must make sure that signed release forms have been turned in for each name on the completed roster.
3. Upon final registration Friday afternoon/night, the team captain will be given wristbands. These wrist bands are not transferable and must be worn on the competitor's wrist during the competition on Saturday and Sunday. Replacement wristbands are \$5.
4. Wristbands will not be issued unless a properly signed release form has been received, and the competitor's name appears on a team's completed roster. No exceptions!

Rules

1. Captains should become familiar with the Rules of Competition and make sure their team is in compliance.
2. Captains should also be certain the team complies with the age requirement.
3. Captains should become familiar with the Safety Rules and make sure that all team members are aware of the same.

Race Format

1. Saturday morning one race for time trials to seed the racing brackets.
2. Generally, teams will stay within the class of competition in which they registered. However, after the seeding races, the race directors will have the right to put teams into the class they feel most appropriate.

Miscellaneous Information

1. The races will once again be held on the Mississippi River at Miller-Riverview Park, Dubuque, Iowa.
2. Tee Shirts and shorts/pants are required for competition.
3. Concessions will be available at the race site.
4. First Aid and ambulance service will be available at the race site.
5. There is ***no*** parking at the Q Casino. Please watch for signs as to where to park and pick up the shuttle. One team vehicle pass will be given to each team.
6. A team photographer will be available at the race site, until noon. Pictures will be taken on Saturday morning. Please get your team to the photographer as soon as possible.
7. Each team will be asked to vote on the Spirit Award, Best Tee Shirt Award, best teamsite. **This year's theme is "County Fair"!**
8. Team sites will be designated.

For additional information or assistance contact:

Dubuque Dragon Boat Association
Attn: Kathy or Mark
Box 477
Dubuque, Iowa 52004-0477

www.dubuquedragonboat.org
e-mail: dubuquedragonboat1988@gmail.com

Rules of Competition

Officiating

The core of Race Officials shall form the Race Committee which shall

1. Preside over and manage the competition.
2. Be the final authority over the competition.
3. Hear any protests that may be made and settle any disputes that may arise.
4. Decide on matters concerning the regulations during the competition
5. Before any decision is rendered by the Head Official, hear the opinion of the specific official in control of the race.

The Race Officials may disqualify any competitor who behaves improperly, or who by his conduct or speech shows contempt towards the officials, other competitors, or onlookers.

Official Timing Procedure

The Starter shall be equipped with a radio which shall be audible to the Timers at the finish. At the Starter's horn, the clocks will be started. Timers will stop their clocks when the boat in their assigned lane removes their flag from the buoy. The team with the fastest time shall be declared the winner.

General

1. A Team Representative from each team shall attend an orientation of the race regulations prior to the races.
2. Written guidelines and the race rules shall be available to teams upon request prior to the competition.
3. All boats and paddles used by the competitors shall be provided by the Race Officials. Race Officials shall assure that paddles of various sizes, lengths, and weights are equally distributed among boats. That allocation of boats and paddles to individual teams shall be the sole discretion of the Officials. The Officials will not be responsible for any failure of equipment during a race and each team is advised to carefully check the boat and paddles allocated to it before racing. The Race Officials are obligated to replace damaged equipment at the request of a team before the team leaves the marshaling area.
4. A team is under the control of the Race Officials from the time it is called to the Team Assembly Area, or 20 minutes before the time of its race, if earlier, until it leaves the Team Assembly Area after its race.
5. Knee pads and/or gloves may be worn and cushions may be used provided they compress to no more than 1 cm. Any other equipment or modifications to the boat or paddles will not be allowed.
6. Each team must have a Team Representative, who must be present in the enclosure during the time that the team is under the control of the Race Officials. The Team Representative will be responsible for liaison with the Race Officials.
7. Once in the marshaling area or on the race course, teams must obey any reasonable instructions given them by the Race Officials.
8. Any team that fails to observe these rules may be disqualified.
9. The Race Organizer reserves the right to refuse any team entry into a race if the team does not comply with the race rules and conduct.
10. All competitors must be 11 years of age or older at the time of the event for Junior Divisions. Team members must be age 14 to paddle on an adult team.

Safety

1. Each competitor will be required to wear a life jacket during the competition. It is the responsibility of the person entering a team to make sure that all members of the team comply with this rule. **Inflatable lifejackets are NOT allowed.**
2. All teams shall have the opportunity to train in a dragon boat prior to the races.
3. The Race Organizer shall be prepared to provide an experienced dragon boat steers-person should it become necessary for safety.
4. Each lane shall be at least 15 meters in width to help prevent collisions.
5. Each competitor is solely responsible for his or her own safety during official practice sessions and during races and no responsibility will be accepted by the Race Officials, or any sponsoring organization for any injury, damage or loss incurred or born by competitors or members of a team.
6. **Everyone in the boat must wear footwear. No flip flops will be allowed. Footwear must have a back on them.**

The Team

1. Team composition shall be governed by the Race Organizer except in events that are qualifying races for international competitions. In such a case, the host country's rules concerning team composition shall take precedent. The minimum number of paddlers is 16.

Elite Crew Mixed Composition: Registration fee includes 25 team members, 18 paddlers, drummer, flag catcher and stern in the boat at any time. **(8) eight women paddlers** in the boat at all times.

Corporate Cup and Adventurers Cup: Registration fee includes 25 team members, 18 paddlers, drummer, flag catcher and stern in the boat at any time. **(8) eight women paddlers** in the boat at all times.

Junior Teams: Registration fee includes 25 team members, 18 paddlers, drummer, flag catcher and stern in the boat at any time. **(8) eight women** in the boat at all times.

Breast Cancer Survivor's Teams: Registration fee includes 25 team members, 18 paddlers, drummer, flag catcher and stern in the boat at any time. Drummer, Flag catcher, and Stern may be of either sex.

Cancer Survivor's Teams: Registration fee includes 25 team members, 18 paddlers, drummer, flag catcher and stern in the boat at any time. Drummer, Flag catcher, and Stern may be of either sex.

Scout Teams: Registration fee includes 25 team members, 18 paddlers, drummer, flag catcher and stern in the boat at any time.

2. No PADDLER may compete on more than one team. Once a PADDLER has competed with one team, he or she may not compete as a member of any other team. This rule applies for the duration of the event. Exception: Sternsman, Drummer & Flag Catcher.
3. The exception to #2 would be that the race organizers reserve the right to permit men or women paddlers to paddle on a second team to provide appropriate competition for guests.
4. Paddling styles. By definition, the acceptable paddling style requires paddlers to sit in a forward facing position. No other style is allowed.
5. Each team is entirely responsible for its own conduct and for complying with the race rules.
6. Each team must wear Tee Shirts and shorts/pants at all times while afloat.
7. Except for instances of medical emergency (certified by the Head Race Official and the Safety Officer), teams may not substitute paddlers between heats.
8. Any team members observed by an official to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs shall be removed from racing and cannot be replaced. (or team disqualification)

Marshaling

1. A team must be assembled in the Team Assembly Area and be ready to board 20 minutes before the time of its race.
2. Team identity checks may be carried out by Officials in the Team Assembly Area, and team members must be able to produce any required identification upon request.
3. A team must board the boat in accordance with the instruction of the Race Officials. All women paddlers will be counted before the boat pushes off.
4. A team must board the boat allocated to it. In events with more than two boats, each boat will carry a number indicating the lane in which the boat is to race.
5. A team is not permitted to choose which boat to use and must race in the lane allocated to its boat.
6. To facilitate the races, after a team has boarded it should leave the boarding area and proceed to the starting area, keeping clear of the course and not interfering with any race which is in progress.

The Start

1. A team in the starting area will obey the instruction of the Starter and other Race Officials under control of the Starter.
2. A team will take up its position in the starting area in the correct lane allocated to it.

3. Boats will line up at the starting point according to instructions from the Race Officials.
4. In the event of a false start, a second horn will sound and all boats must return immediately and the race will be restarted. The starter will issue a warning to any team that causes a false start.
5. Any team that fails to return after a false start, or that causes two false starts will be disqualified for that race. Zero time allowed.
6. **Only sternmen of an Elite Division team are allowed to paddle.**
7. Sternsmen in any division are *not* allowed to push off the starting platform.

Race Conduct

1. Each boat must remain in its correct lane and must not interfere with other boats in the race. Lane markers will be positioned on the course. Course distances will be 250 meters.
2. Safety boats may follow each race to observe the course taken by each boat.
3. Any boat failing to keep to its proper course will be warned by a Race Official by a red flag. Boats must not pass outside buoys marking the edge of the race course. Crews taking a course outside the lane buoys will receive a time penalty not to exceed 5 seconds.
4. Only Sternsmen of an International class race (Elite division) are allowed to paddle during the race. Stern paddling is not allowed by any sternsman during any other class of race.
5. In the event of a boat failing to keep its proper course and thereby interfering with the course of another boat, or in the event of a collision between two or more boats, the Head Race Official may disqualify the offending boat or boats, or may order one or more boats to re-paddle the race if, in the Head Race Official's opinion, the result of the race has been substantially affected.
6. If, in the opinion of the Head Race Official, a boat has been swamped or capsized deliberately, the team will be disqualified from the competition and may lose the opportunity to participate in future competitions.
7. If, in the opinion of the Head Race Official, a boat is damaged deliberately by a team, the Race Organizer reserves the right to require said team to pay for the costs of repairs to the damaged boat.
8. It is the responsibility of the Race Organizer to provide adequate safety boats and keep the course clear of unauthorized crafts.

Finish

1. The finishing order of a race and the time taken by each boat will be determined by the finishing judges whose decision shall be final.

2. In the event of a dead heat for any place determining advancement to the next round, those crews involved in the dead head will immediately re-paddle over the full course. Teams not involved in the dead heat will immediately return to the Team Assembly Area and disembark.
3. To qualify as finishing a race, all paddlers, drummer, flag catcher and stern person must remain in the boat until the boat returns to the marshaling area. Only the flag catcher may pull the flag. Failure to follow rules could result in up to a 3 second time penalty.
4. If a paddle is dropped into the water by accident during a race and not retrieved, the paddler may, at his discretion, use a spare or not paddle for the remainder of the race. All paddlers must stay in the boat.
5. If a paddle is deliberately thrown in such a manner as to enter the lane and hinder a competing boat, the boat from which the paddle came may be disqualified.
6. Each race consists of two 250 meter heats. Whoever pulls their flag first wins the heat. After the finish of the first heat, stern persons must maintain control of the boat and turn left towards the channel. The boat on the shore-side lane is responsible for not colliding with the other boat. Allow plenty of clearance. Stay clear of the racing lanes. Proceed back up the channel to the starting line without interfering with the race underway. After the second heat, proceed immediately to the unloading area. Avoid the racing lanes and do not interfere with the race underway.
7. In the event that the flag catcher misses the flag, the team that misses the flag will receive a three second time penalty from when the team crosses the flag buoy according to the backup stopwatch time.
8. In the event of a spin-out occurring from equipment breakage all paddlers should stop the boat and signal the officials by raising paddles. This heat will be re-run. Teams experiencing an accidental spin-out may either take a 3 second penalty from the opposing team's heat time or may request a re-run. Only the team captain may make this request of the head race official in person. Allowances for reruns are at the discretion of the race officials whose decision is final.

Protests

1. In the event of a team wishing to lodge a protest against another team, the team captain must lodge the protest in writing with the Head Race Official within 15 minutes after the end of the race. The protest, together with the report and recommendations of the Race Officials, will be referred to the Race Committee whose decision shall be final.
2. A \$25 deposit must accompany each protest. If a protest is disallowed, the \$25 deposit is forfeited.
3. No protests will be allowed concerning equipment or any matter other than the conduct of teams in a race.

All rules follow USDBF guidelines

SAFETY RULES

WE INSIST THE FOLLOWING SAFETY RULES BE FOLLOWED:

1. It is the captain's responsibility to orient the team to these rules before they enter the boats for the first time.
2. NO alcohol on or near the boats during practice or competition.
3. ALL paddlers must sign a release form and be physically fit enough to participate before entering any boat at any time.
4. When loading/unloading from the dock, enter & exit cautiously by pairs. Keep low in the boat and use your hands on the gunwales to keep your balance. We stress loading and unloading procedures because that is the greatest chance for injury.
5. **All teams must have life jackets on and fastened during practice and competition. Inflatable lifejackets are NOT allowed.**
6. All teams must have an experienced and approved sternsperson.
7. Respect the equipment. Do not scrape paddles along the gunwales of the boat. This creates potential splinters and ruins the paddles and boat. (It is also a sign of bad technique). **Do not use "stick tack" or "bat tack" or pine tar stick on the paddles.**
8. Do not sit or stand on life jackets. To do so shortens the life-span of the jackets and is against the rules in a competition.
9. Before taking your team through any strenuous sprints or race starts, be sure they are warmed up to avoid any strains.
10. In the event of bad weather, high winds, lightning, or approaching darkness, get your team off the river immediately.
11. Stay away from the navigation channel and avoid power boats. You do not have an exclusive right to the river.
12. Be considerate of the team following you. Stow the equipment properly.
13. Use common sense. If these rules are followed by all, we believe everyone can have a summer full of fun that is injury free.

The Race Committee and the DDBA reserve the right to refuse the use of any dragon boat or equipment to any team or team member failing to follow these rules.

Updated: July 19. 2026