

Entering a Marathon Race In Scotland

So you are ready for your first marathon race. You've done all of the training, you've done the practise, what do you do next? Races are run to be as friendly as possible but you can do your bit to try to make the process as easy as possible.

Marathon racing is organised on a divisional basis, based on ability, rather than on age and sex. Before the race starts it is a good idea to look at the racing standards chart (in the BCU racing handbook under section D1) where you will be able to work out which division you should be in, rather than starting in the bottom, division 9. For example, if you can cover 1000m in under 5 minutes and 30 seconds you should be in division 6 – This should be confirmed with the race organiser & or the SCA Marathon Committee prior to the race.

You then need to select a marathon event. Hasler racing is organised on a regional basis, so you should have up to ten races a year, within your locality. Hasler racing is set up so that novice paddlers come into the sport and race over about 6.5km in a safe environment without any portages. Portaging involves paddlers getting out of their boats, running a short distance with the boat (originally to get over lock gates in canals) and getting back onto the water. All paddlers ranked below division 7 must wear a buoyancy aid.

Div 1, 2 & 3 paddlers compete on the Long Course (about 20km)
Div 4, 5 & 6 paddlers compete on the Short Course (about 13km)
Div 7, 8 & 9 paddlers compete on the Mini Course (about 6.5km)
Lightning paddlers compete on the Lightning Course (about 3.5km)

For juniors, under 12 years old, there are 4 mini classes (under 12 & under 10 - male & female) they all race in the same design of boat, called a Lightning. Some events may also organise mini K2 (Hody) and mini K4 (Rocket) races as well. Under 12s can race in Division 9 or Lightnings at the same time to allow for their development, but once promoted above division 9, they are deemed to be competent racers and may not race in the Lightning classes.

The race organiser should post their race entry details on the SCA's website www.CanoeScotland.org and distribute the information to local clubs. Start times, costs and meeting points will be detailed there. In Scotland, entries are usually taken on the day of the race, prior to the event, but some events may require advanced entries and this will be noted on race entry details on www.CanoeScotland.org. In England and at international events, it is usually cheaper to enter a race in advance and can make the race organisers' lives easier so that they can concentrate on organising a quality experience.

When you get to the race, you need to look for the booking-in desk (sometimes a car with the tail gate open & a queue!), complete the entry form and pay the race fee. You will be given a race number board (to be fixed into the clip on your boat) or race number bib to wear if you do not have a clip on your boat. It is important to make sure that your race number board is attached securely to the back of your boat. If the organisers can't read your race number at the finish, your time may not be recorded or you may not score points for your club. Next thing is to look for the course map - don't be afraid to ask around for someone to explain the course to you if it does not seem clear.

There will be a race briefing around half an hour before the start, listen carefully to this as there may be updated information regarding the course. Then it's time to make your way to the start. Warm up, but stay upstream of the start line. Normally races will begin with the Long Course, followed by the Short Course, then the Mini Course, followed by the Lightnings – that is starting with the fastest first.

When you finish the race, after you have heard the whistle, clear the finish line and stay in the cool down area. Once cooled down get out at the allotted place and return your number board or bib. There may be a prize giving shortly after the last competitor has finished. The Results will be posted on the internet on www.CanoeScotland.org & perhaps the club's website as soon as possible. Promotions and demotions will be advised to the clubs & then on to the competitors as soon as possible after the event (3-10 days)
Now you start the process again, ready for your next race.