



**Date:** 18/06/2025

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**To:** All Members

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**From:** Mike Lord

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**Subject:** Member notification of suggested competition rule changes

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During the 2023/24 and 2024/25 seasons, SLSNZ gave the membership the opportunity to provide suggestions to the Sport Competition Manual. [See here](#)

Below is a summary of the member submissions.

These suggestions will now be reviewed and considered by a group of subject matter experts consisting of experienced officials, coaches, athletes and staff. All final recommendations will be submitted to the National Sport Committee for endorsement at their August meeting, after which the membership will be notified and the Competition Manual updated.

If you have any feedback on the below proposed changes, please email [mike.lord@surflifesaving.org.nz](mailto:mike.lord@surflifesaving.org.nz) by **Friday July 4**.

## Section 2 – General Conditions

<p><b>Current Rule</b> Wetsuits 2.10.1</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> Should read “wetsuits may be worn at the competitor’s discretion”.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> The rules for wetsuit use have already been updated since this call for submissions as outlined in the <a href="#">Wetsuit Memo (20 May 2025)</a> and will be included in the updated Competition Manual.</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> Providing a positive experience for all members and enable them to race in what they feel comfortable in. We need to promote a safe fun environment for our athletes to compete in and I have observed over many years athletes getting cold to the point of hypothermia at events. It should not be up to the event referee to tell competitors whether it’s cold enough to wear a wetsuit or not this should be up to the individual.</p>
<p><b>Current Rule</b> 2.13 and the subsequent rules. Additionally, the corresponding equipment specifications</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> - Clarity needs to be provided as to what constitutes a vest (is a high vis t-shirt okay? - The wording on the colour needs to be clearer e.g. athletes must wear Yellow high vis vests - The consequences should be stated to take the pressure of the event officials.</p> <p><b>Update:</b> An update to this rule has already been drafted and will be included in the updated Competition Manual.</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> We are currently breaching this rule at every North Island and National carnival where athletes are being allowed to compete in a multitude of vest colours especially orange which is specified as "do not use". We even have NZ team athletes break the rule by posting images to social media not wearing vests whilst on craft etc - clearly without enforcing consequences nothing will change.</p>



<p><b>Current Rule</b> 2.22</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> Maximum number of crews/teams/individuals should be reviewed to reflect current H&amp;S expectations, water safety capabilities and athletes/coach feedback. Furthermore, the rule should state event/arena referees must document the rationale as to why they are running a race outside of these guidelines. For example - how is it safe to have 16 teams for all other races apart from grand Cameron which is 48 teams - is this logical?</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> Often field numbers are determined on the day at the discretion of the key officials which makes sense but the rationale for operating outside of these parameters is not documented therefore if something were to go wrong how are we protecting those officials for making those decisions. Furthermore, its important these sizes are reviewed to reflect the changes in H&amp;S requirements and expectations of the competitors as I haven't seen this change for over 10 years. Additionally, a progressions matrix should be developed and standardised across our sporting events.</p>
<p><b>Current Rule</b> 2.28.5. In Events where Competitors run to and across a finish line, the finish of the Race is judged when the Competitor crosses the line, upright on their feet. The finish is judged on the chest of the Competitor when crossing the finish line. Falling across the line is not deemed to have finished the Race.</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> If athlete falls across the line they should get the next obvious position not disqualified.</p> <p><b>Suggested New Rule</b> If an athlete is deemed to fall across the line on the finish while racing another athlete, they will receive the next obvious position (rather than be DQ'd).</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> Falling across the line usually happens in desperation rather than ill spirits and usually has zero effect on any other competitors in the race. Seems crazy they don't get the next position in the race when they clearly deserve it.</p> <p><b>Rationale for new rule</b> In fairness to athletes and common sense.</p>
<p><b>Current Rule</b> 2.7.2 Medals &amp; Points, Page 27</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> Re-Word: Points for Individual events to be from 1-6, 6 for first place 5 for second etc down to 1 for 6th. The same could also be done for teams and follow the same model as IRB points.</p> <p><b>Suggested New Rule</b> 2.7.2 "Individual Points: Points awarded are 6 points for 1st place, 5 points for second place, 4 points for 3rd place, 3 points for 4th place, 2 points for 5th place, 1 point for 6th place." "Team Events: Points awarded are 6 points for 1st place, 5 points for second place, 4 points for 3rd place, 3 points for 4th place, 2 points for 5th place, 1 point for 6th place"</p> <p><b>Suggested New Rule</b> IRB, Boats &amp; Canoe Points be weighted on number of crews in the final. If there is a straight final of 4 crews, the points should be 4,3,2,1 not 7,6,5,4</p> <p><b>Update:</b> The rules for points have already been updated since this call for submissions as outlined in the <a href="#">May Sport Update</a> and will be included in the updated Competition Manual.</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> I believe rewarding athletes in the top 6 rather than the top 3 will allow more athletes to feel they are contributing to the club success. This also will create more competitive racing outside the top 3 as very often we see athletes slow down or lose that competitiveness because they are outside the top 3. It will enhance enjoyment for those not able to make the top 3 and give athletes who aren't top 3 capable something to race for.</p> <p><b>Rationale for new rule</b> As per question 6 the new rule will create more competition outside of the top 3 in each event. It will enhance the athlete's enjoyment knowing that if they cannot medal, they can still contribute to team points, creating greater satisfaction for finishing outside of the medals.</p>

<p><b>Current Rule</b> Table 2.2 Masters divisions</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> Should the masters' divisions be reviewed to better reflect the entries over the past 5 nationals</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> The masters divisions were changed several seasons ago however at recent nationals we have seen multiple age groups combined due to entries. This should be reviewed to be consistent with membership expectations accompanied with consistency across other disciplines and entries</p>
<p><b>Current Rule</b> Officials General</p>	<p><b>Suggested New Rule</b> We need to change the narrative on officials. Change the instructions to unless you clearly saw the competitor didn't tag their fellow competitor or likewise to they clearly saw that the competitor didn't get to or touch the bouy before putting up their hand. If the official is guessing that they didn't get there or might not of touched their mate cause the official couldn't quite see it, then there's no dq. currently we have it all backwards. The old school officiating thought process is dead. The current up to date , modern official is helping run the event not looking for reasons to dq kids after the kids do all the work to get to a bouy don't quite climb on it right and put up their hand or slip off on a single tied wobbly bouy and climb back on put their hand up second time when board paddlers went on first put up and the IRB sees the board gone already. All this caused by a f up in the wording saying you need to wrap arm around and on top of bouy. Get rid of it all and go back to only dq if they clearly didn't get there. Or clearly didn't tag. . Everyone has more fun with that thought process.</p>	<p><b>Rationale for new rule</b> Fairness, enjoyment, language, positivity mind set not negative. Happier officials and athletes. Modern society thinking.</p>
<p>IRB Division</p>	<p><b>Suggested New Rule</b> 1) Division Eligibility Regional events must require 4 teams to be entered at the start of the competition within a division for the division to be held. Points will scale with entries. If 3 or less teams are entered into a division, the teams will merge with the next eligible division of the same gender. National events must require 6 teams to be entered at the start of the competition within a division for it to be held. If less than 6 teams are entered, the teams will merge with the next eligible division of the same gender.</p> <p><b>Proposed change</b> Regional events must require 4 teams to be entered at the start of the competition within a division for the division to be held. Points will scale with entries. If 3 or less teams are entered into a division, the teams will merge with the next eligible division of the same gender. National events must require 6 teams to be entered at the start of the competition within a division for it to be held. If less than 6 teams are entered, the teams will merge with the next eligible division of the same gender.</p>	<p><b>Rationale for new rule</b> Regional events may only attract a limited number of crews, and a whole division may be unable to be fielded. By ensuring a minimum entry number of 4 teams, receiving a medal is not a guarantee and incentivises competition. By scaling points for number of entries, brings fairness to other competitors in other divisions who have to compete against more athletes in the finals. it also brings fairness to the club competition where entering a single team in their own division would guarantee 28 unanswered points. Nationals is the pinnacle event of IRB Racing. A field of 6 teams (full Final) should be the minimum to ensure integrity of the competition is upheld.</p>
<p>IRB Masters</p>	<p><b>Suggested New Rule</b> Addition of Mass Rescue and Tube Rescue (possibly) to IRB Masters division</p> <p><b>Update:</b> The options for master's tube &amp; mass were included in the 2025 NI &amp; NZ IRB competitions</p>	<p><b>Rationale for new rule</b> At IRB nationals this year 90% of master's crews raced in Open division for Mass Rescue, creating a lot of extra admin for that specific race and division. A Masters Mass Rescue division would have been cleaner and quicker to run, also giving the master's more competition in their own grade would be beneficial. Tube Rescue MIGHT also follow this logic</p>

## Section 5 – Surf Canoe Events

<p><b>Current Rule</b> Section 5 Surf Canoe 5.1 General Conditions 5.1.3</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> 5.1.3 Add Mixed to events To read: Under 19, Open, Masters and Mixed.</p> <p><b>Suggested New Rule</b> 5.1.2.1 If crews have an uneven mix of male/female athletes they must compete in the respective male age category.</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> To enable 50/50 male/female crews to compete in their own event at race level Our club believes this would increase enjoyment and participation at canoe events</p> <p><b>Rationale for new rule</b> In the interests of offering all interested male and female athletes the opportunity to compete in surf canoe if they so wish. Mixed teams would encourage increased participation, and we believe improve overall enjoyment of the sport</p>
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## Section 3 & 7 – Rescue Tube Rescue and Board Rescue Events

Current Rule	Proposed change	Rationale for removal/change
<p><b>Current Rule</b> Rescue Tube Rescue</p> <p>Paddleboard Rescue Race 7.9 pg 155 7.9.3. Procedure (d) The Race is concluded when the patient and rescuer have correctly completed the course, both in contact with the paddle board, and cross the finish line between the two gate markers that designate their beach position.</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> Remove: "between the two gate markers that designate their beach position".</p> <p><b>Suggested New Rule</b> SLSA Wording: Rescue Tube Rescue: On return to the beach the rescuers must drag or carry the patient to the finish line. The finish is judged on the chest of the first team member of the carrying party to cross the finish line denoted by two green or arena coloured finish flags in an upright position on their feet (the rescue tube need not be attached to the patient).</p> <p>Board Rescue: The finish is judged on the chest of the first competitor of the team (i.e. patient or rescuer) crossing the start/finish line on their feet, with both the rescuer and patient being in contact with the board.</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> Gates should be removed from both tube rescue and board rescue races. Competitors should start in front of their marker (indicating buoy colour) but we should get rid of gates and there should just be a finish line to cross. Reasons: Getting a fair arena for 9 lanes is almost impossible - requiring teams to finish through their gate makes this even more unfair. By enabling teams to cross the finish line at any point between the two flags this means teams can use currents and drifts to their advantage rather than working against them.</p> <p><b>Rationale for new rule</b> Removing the requirement to finish through gates makes what can be an unfair lane draw fairer for all teams. It also makes adjudging the finish order easier for officials using video footage from the ends of the finish line instead of back-to-back in the middle. It will enhance the enjoyment of participants given the improvement in fairness when conditions make providing a fair arena difficult.</p>
<p><b>Current Rule</b> 7.9.1 (f) "On the starting signal the patient shall enter the water and swim to their allotted buoy, the patient shall place their hand or their forearm over the top of the buoy and signal their arrival by raising their other arm to a vertical position whilst remaining in contact with the buoy"</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> "...The patient shall place their hand or their forearm ON ANY PART OF THE BUOY THAT IS ABOVE THE WATER and signal their arrival by raising their other arm..."</p> <p><b>Suggested New Rule</b> "On the starting signal the patient shall enter the water and swim to their allotted buoy, the patient shall place their hand or their forearm ON ANY PART OF THE</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> Rules are, by their nature, in place to ensure an even playing field. There is no competitive difference between putting your hand on top or on any part of the buoy above the water level. The distinction between the two is arbitrary and is more of a trap that creates unnecessary DQs than it is for preventing any kind of competitive advantage.</p> <p><b>Rationale for new rule</b> Obviously for us at East End having a national title removed because of the placing of a hand seems unnecessarily harsh and as such we believe this rule should be</p>

	<p>BUOY THAT IS ABOVE THE WATER and signal their arrival by raising their other arm to a vertical position whilst remaining in contact with the buoy"</p> <p>SLSA Wording: On the starting signal the patients enter the water and swim to their allotted buoy. On reaching their allotted buoy, the patient shall place their forearm over the top of the buoy and then signal their arrival by raising the other arm to a vertical position whilst remaining in contact with the buoy. The said signal, subject to all conditions being fulfilled, shall be the determining factor in judging the patients arrival at their buoy.</p>	<p>changed. I also believe this new wording would be similar to the Australian rule. This new rule will allow for any competitor 'mistakes' as well such as a hand slipping, or for choppy conditions that may move the buoy around, preventing a hand or forearm on top position. This is much more fair and will give athletes more leeway, without creating any unfair outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Current Rule</b> Page 61., 4 Person Tube Rescue Procedure, 3.4.2 (d/e). Also mirrored in 2 Person Tube Rescue Procedure, 3.5.3 (e/f)</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> Clarify, and re-word the procedure depending on the desired effect. Currently - brought to attention at the 2024 Nationals, there are varying interpretations of this rule. Does the competitor need to lower their signalling arm if the hand/arm resting on top of the bouy falls off or is removed from the bouy? General consensus is yes; however, this is not very well clarified in the wording of this procedure. Suggest additional wording to 3.4.2 (d) and 3.5.3 (e): "...while remaining in contact with the buoy. [If contact with the buoy is lost, the patient must lower their arm, ceasing signalling until correct contact is again made.]..."</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> Clarity of desired procedure, for event guards, officials and competitors. Removes variance in individuals' interpretation of the rule.</p>

## Section 8 - Beach Events

Current Rule	Proposed change	Rationale for removal/change
<p><b>Current Rule</b> Suggestion is to replace the 8.3.5. Procedure with the following:</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> With specific regard to the beach flag event, the Event Referee would like to remind team managers, coaches and competitors of the following key rules associated with the event:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Any competitors lifting or moving after the starter calls “heads down” and prior to the start signal has made a starting break infringement and will be disqualified. This includes any repositioning of the competitor.</li> <li>2. The competitor’s stomach must be in contact with the sand. It is noted that the lifting of the stomach off the ground prior to the start signal is an infringement and a competitor will be disqualified.</li> <li>3. Elbows should be extended 90 degrees to the body’s mid-line. It is noted that the arms are not required to be 90 degrees to the body midline.</li> <li>4. The body’s midline should be 90 degrees to the start line.</li> <li>5. Competitor’s heels or any part of the feet must be touching.</li> <li>6. Competitors hands must be on top of each other with the fingertips to wrists.</li> <li>7. Competitors may level, flatten, and compress their starting area but no scooping, mounding or digging of the sand is permitted.</li> <li>8. Competitors may push their toes into the sand once they have assumed the starting position.</li> </ol> <p>These key event aspects will be a focus of officials at the competition.</p> <p><b>Proposed change</b> 8.3.5. Procedure (a) Competitors take their allotted positions, a minimum of 1.5m apart at the start line. (b) Competitors may level/flatten of compress the starting area, but no scooping or digging of sand permitted. (c) When directed by the starter, Competitors shall lie face down with their toes on the start line, heels or any part of the feet together, and may push toes into sand once lying face down in the start position. (d)The body’s mid-line should be 90 degrees to the start line, Elbows should be extended 90 degrees to the body’s midline and hips and stomach must be in contact with the sand. (e) Hands must be on top of each other, with fingertips touching the opposite hand’s wrist. The competitors shall then await the command “Competitors Ready” from the starter. (f) When called by the starter for heads down, the chin must touch any part of the hands while maintaining a straight head alignment. At the starter’s whistle blast, the Competitor shall get to their feet as quickly as possible, run to the finish line and attempt to obtain a baton. (g) Any competitor picking up two batons shall be disqualified from the Event.</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b></p> <p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> Additional to this we may need to add additional resources, videos or diagrams detailing the position of athlete for the start and 90deg lines showing mid points and elbow lines. The other part is showing what are DQ’s compared to what is an elimination.</p>

## Section 9 - IRB Events

Current Rule	Proposed change	Rationale for removal/change
<p><b>Current Rule</b> 9.1.5 (j) Prior to leaving the IRB, the driver will switch off the engine. From a seated position only, the driver will then exit the port (left) side of the IRB, (regardless of the direction the IRB slews upon beaching), and run to and cross the finish line. The driver must exit and be grounded (minimum one foot on the sand) before passing the front of the IRB. The driver must not step on top of, or launch from, the pontoon during the exit. The driver must ensure they run between the two gates that mark their finish line.</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> Remove (Prior to leaving the IRB, the driver will switch off the engine. )</p> <p><b>Suggested New Rule</b> 9.1.5 between (i) and (J) When beaching the IRB, the driver must render the motor electrically dead by activation of motor kill switch. If the stop switch lanyard is used it must remain attached to the motor. (Engine Shutdown Procedure)</p> <p><b>Suggested New Rule</b> 9.1.5 - addition of "at all times when the motor is in gear, a hand must be in control of the tiller arm. Failure to do so will result in disqualification"</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> Add New Wording As below.</p> <p><b>Rationale for new rule</b> Defining the engine shutdown procedure, which is referenced later in the rules, but not defined in the rules.</p> <p><b>Rationale for new rule</b> As an irb instructor, the first thing I always teach is that you must always have a hand on the tiller arm when the motor is in gear. Failing to have a hand on the tiller indicates that the person is not in control of the irb. If people are wanting to do a two-handed pull start, the motor should be in neutral and then put into gear once the motor has been started and the driver has put their hand on the tiller arm. Starting the motor with your right hand and holding onto the boarding handle should also require the boat to be started in neutral as well</p>
<p><b>Current Rule</b> 9.2.2 (c) The crew return to shore and complete the Race by the driver completing engine shutdown procedures, exiting the IRB and running through the start/finish line.</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> 9.2.2 (c) The crew return to shore and complete the Race by the driver completing engine SHUTDOWN procedures, exiting the IRB and running through the start/finish line.</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> Shutdown procedure is referenced elsewhere in the manual. another proposed rule amendment that I have submitted defines the shutdown procedure.</p>
<p><b>Current Rule</b> 9.6.4 (d) (iii) On the beach side of the IRB turning buoy, after the IRB has rounded the buoy.</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> From the beach side of the IRB turning buoy, after the IRB has rounded the buoy.</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> Current wording suggests that entry into the water must happen on the beach side of the turning buoy, where in practice the crewman must exit the buoy from the beach side but may physically enter the water on the ocean side of the turning buoy.</p>
<p><b>Current Rule</b> Page 200, Figure 9.3 Tube Rescue - nominal distance of swim 25m</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> Reduce tube rescue nominal distance of swim to 15m</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> Will make events run faster due to cumulative savings, will make more competitive races, reduces the existing gulf across grades between crewpersons with competitive swimming backgrounds and those without</p>
<p><b>Current Rule</b> IRB Rule 9.1.5. The Event(s) Mass Rescue: 9.3.2. The Procedure (c) The Driver and Crewperson may exit the IRB once the Driver has completed the shutdown procedure.</p>	<p><b>Proposed change</b> I would strongly suggest that we change the wording of this rule to: 'The crew (crew person and patient) cannot exit the IRB until the driver has completed the shutdown procedure and left the boat.'</p>	<p><b>Rationale for removal/change</b> I have serious concerns from what I saw at the Nationals this year of the best crews slinging the crew person over the front before the driver has left the boat and even at times before the shutdown procedure is completed. I know that technically they could do this last year, but I am concerned that we will see a significant increase in this 'technique' next season if we allow it.</p> <p><b>Rationale for new rule</b></p>

		There is a serious risk of the crew person becoming injured and/or even driven over if the crew person is not strong enough to pull the boat around and/or the driver fails to 'kill' the engine.
<b>Current Rule</b> 2) Formalisation of IRB DQ 10.4 Protests	<b>Proposed change</b> When a team is disqualified by the event team for a breach of the rules, the team manager is to be informed by the designated representative from the event staff with a written form with the Disqualification code and a brief description of the alleged offence. If the event staff have not processed the DQ form prior to the conclusion of the preceding race, then the DQ is not eligible. The time is to also be recorded on the DQ form. Once a DQ is formally issued the alleged offender has 5 minutes to inform the designated representative from the event staff.	
3) IRB lanes	<b>Proposed change</b> A maximum of 7 lanes may be run at an IRB event. Nominally only 6 lanes will be used during normal circumstances. 7 lanes are to only be used for exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances may include, leading (top 3) IRB impeded by trailing IRB, Leading IRB (top 3) impeded by capsized vessel and for safety reasons was unable to complete race. Number of entries is not an exceptional circumstance. The seventh lane may be used in circumstances where lane 1 has a significant advantage or disadvantage and the whole arena will shift one lane across to achieve an equitable arena.	

Regards,

Mike Lord  
Sport Development Officer  
Surf Life Saving New Zealand

m 0274571025  
e mike.lord@surflifesaving.org.nz