

## UNITED HOSPITALS HEAD RACE 2026

### Competitors' instructions

UH Head 2026	Chiswick Bridge	Kew Rail Br	Kew Road Br	Richmond Lock
High water	05:22	05:26	05:28	05:29
Low water	13:13	13:28	13:35	13:39
High water	17:38	17:42	17:44	17:58
Officials briefing	09:15			
Start of boating for division 1	09:40			
Division 1 start	10:50			
Return of last crew to ULBH	11:40			
Start of boating for division 2	11:40			
Division 2 start	12:40			
Return of last crew to ULBH	13:30			
Dusk	17:52			

1. **Racing in accordance with British Rowing rules.**
2. **Safety paramount:** each club and cox is responsible for ensuring that their boat is safe (including heel restraints, buoyancy compartments and coxes' buoyancy aids).
3. **All coxes must have adequate** coxing experience on the Tideway
4. In the case of **emergency** officials will follow the emergency action plan. **In general if a rower or cox enters the water it is important that they stay with the boat unless there is obvious danger.** If you are in the water be careful to avoid the launch engine.
5. The Tideway Code (TC)<sup>1</sup> applies at all times except where modified by the event's rules agreed with the PLA<sup>2</sup>:

***The races will be held between Syon Park Pavillion and Chiswick Bridge with the tide in the navigational channel. The river will remain open at all times during the event. Competitors will break from the rowing code in the following manner:***

- o As and when it is safe to do so competitors may overtake in the restricted zones [at Kew];*
- o As and when it is safe to do so competitors may follow the racing line.*

6. Captains must ensure that all coxes are aware of the marshalling system and course.
7. **There may be changes in the racing format or marshalling system due to the conditions which will be announced prior to boating – these may include curtailment of the course at either start or finish, or, exceptionally, the race may be held in the flood direction. If there are significant changes to the format then there will be a specific coxes' meeting held immediately prior to the race.**

#### Going to the marshalling area

8. Ensure that you boat in good time from UL and even earlier from TSSC (i.e. for the slower female crews 70 minutes and the slower male crews 50 minutes before race time). Time penalties will be awarded if you arrive in the marshalling area after start time.
9. Follow the standard rules of navigation at all times as set out in TC, in particular taking care when crossing the Fairway outside ULBH and at the Syon Crossing at Isleworth Ferry Gate

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.pla.co.uk/assets/THE\\_ROWING\\_CODE.pdf](https://www.pla.co.uk/assets/THE_ROWING_CODE.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://pla.co.uk/river-events>

against the stream. You must give way to any boats on the stream when crossing the Fairway above ULBH and at Syon. It is expected that there will be a sculling race starting at Richmond at about 10:30 and crews for division 1 may find this race in progress when crossing the river. Please give way.

10. Proceed upriver on Middlesex above the Syon Crossing until you reach the marshalling area.

### **Marshalling and the start**

11. All boats must ensure that the fairway is kept clear for other river users. It is expected that there will be a sculling race starting at Richmond Lock at about 10:30. Please ensure you keep to the Middlesex side when marshalling.
12. The top section of each division will marshal alongside Isleworth Ait against the stream on the Middlesex side, with the lowest number crew at the Syon Park end. The second section of each division will marshal on the Chiswick side of the red flag adjacent to Syon House Pavilion, lowest number towards Syon Park.
13. Keep paddling up to maintain your position relative to the bank. Marshal line astern. Remember the rights of other river users. Keep as close to the Middlesex bank as possible during marshalling
14. The top section of each division will be turned first. When these crews have been started, crews in the second section of each division will be called up into the space vacated by the previous crews. Please paddle up quickly in this time.
15. Await the marshals' instructions before proceeding to turn, making sure you keep paddling up against the stream to maintain your position and when asked to turn ensure that the river is clear before you start to manoeuvre and that you end up in the starboard aspect of the channel parallel to the bank as shown in the course maps.
16. Do not overtake other crews before you pass the start line.
17. Crews will have a rolling start. You will be told by the starter: 'crew x: go'.
18. The race will be timed from the bows passing the start line. Crews will be set off at approximately 15 second intervals.

### **The race**

19. All coxes must conversant with the abandonment protocol and be ready to follow officials' instructions, including the possibility of needing to stop and turn away from danger.
20. During the race, remember the rights of other river users at all times. Watch for other crews crossing against the stream at Syon and UL.
21. Please anticipate a fast flowing stream due to the anticipated land water conditions. Remember that this means that manoeuvres take longer to complete and you can travel a long way in a very short period of time. ANTICIPATE your actions and those of other river users well in advance. Safety is paramount.
22. Competitors will be allowed to follow the racing line during the race when it is safe to do so. If it is not safe (e.g. because on an oncoming powered vessel) you must steer a course as far to the starboard (i.e. Surrey) aspect of the fairway as possible in accordance with TC, leaving sufficient room to avoid conflict with any boats travelling against the stream in the Surrey in-shore zone. If in doubt, STOP.
23. Overtaking should be done in as short a time possible. The overtaking crew must proceed to the Middlesex side of the slower crew BUT ensure that the overtaking crew does not encroach into the port aspect of the fairway during this manoeuvre. Once the overtaking boat has passed the slower boat, it must regain the Surrey side as soon as possible.
24. Overtaking will be allowed in the restricted zones at Kew Road and Kew Rail bridges in accordance with the event's agreement with the PLA when it is safe to do so. However there will be launch based officials in the area, who may require for safety reasons that all crews follow each other (proceed 'line astern'), and prohibit overtaking in these areas. Failure to comply with the officials' instructions, particularly by attempting to overtake in the Kew Bridge restricted zones when this has been expressly prohibited by the officials, will be dealt

with severely. The offending cox can expect that the boat will be disqualified and that the issue will be reported to the PLA and TRRC.

25. If the launch based officials at Kew require crews to proceed 'line astern' in one or both restricted zones then they will give the following instructions to crews at the beginning of the relevant restricted zone: 'Caution ahead - No overtaking allowed - Proceed line astern'.
26. You MUST pass through the starboard aspect of the centre span of Kew Road Bridge and the starboard aspect of the main span of the Railway Bridge (marked by the orange lights) – see the course maps. Any crew not doing so will be disqualified.

#### The finish

27. The finish is where the bows pass the finish line.
28. The Chiswick Bridge Restricted Zone is in force throughout this event. Crews must comply with the TC when entering the Chiswick Bridge Restricted Zone. There must be no stopping or turning in this zone.
29. After the finish: you must pass through the Chiswick Bridge Restricted Zone in accordance with the TC but turn promptly before the Ship Inn red buoy so as not to cause conflict with external oared boats crossing against the stream at the Ship. Crews returning to ULBH must turn to Surrey in accordance with the map provided. Take care when proceeding back to ULBH to ensure that you stay in the Surrey in-shore zone in accordance with TC until you reach the water outfall 100yards east of UL, marked by a marshalling launch. Ensure that the river is safe before crossing back to the Middlesex side. Keep the navigation lanes clear at all times.