

Flatwater Classic Tips for Paddlers

Sunday, October 5, 2008

Please read this flyer BEFORE you race. It has many handy tips and instructions. Thanks!

NEW!

All participants must check in at registration to sign a waiver and pick up your boat numbers.

Please tell us if you:

1. Changed paddling partners (they must sign a waiver).
2. Changed boats (you will want to change racing classes).

Blisters are probably the most frequent medical problem a novice encounters. Try not to grip the paddle too tightly and change hand position periodically. Sometimes light gloves and/or keeping your hands wet will help.

Boat numbers You will receive a set (two) of boat numbers. On the day of the race, apply them to a clean area on the upper left and right sides of the front of your craft. They must be visible from both sides of the river. **Please do not have any other race numbers visible.** There will be a \$10 charge for duplicate numbers. Therefore, please do not lose or forget your boat numbers.

Hut! Veteran racers call “hut” every 10 strokes or so. At the call, paddlers switch sides. This keeps the paddlers fresher and lessens fatigue, especially with the bow paddlers. Switching sides can also help control the direction of the canoe without having to rudder or do a “J stroke”.

Valuables Carry cash, ID, electronic vehicle keys, non-waterproof watches, etc. in a waterproof container tied to your boat. Wearing “Croakies” with a float on your glasses may save them from a trip to the riverbed.

Water Quality and Safety Please remember that even though the Chicago River has come a long way, there is still bacteria and other pollution in the river. US EPA recommends taking precautions among them are washing your hands before eating or touching anything that might go into your mouth and being careful to keep open wounds clean and dry.

You can help make the Chicago River cleaner by letting the Illinois EPA know that you think the Chicago River should be clean enough to support uses such as canoeing and kayaking. Send your request for cleaner water to the Illinois Pollution Control Board, which is reviewing water quality standards right now.

John Therriault, Assistant Clerk
Illinois Pollution Control Board
100 West Randolph Street, Suite 11-500
Chicago, Illinois 60601
RE: Rule Making R08-009

A sample letter can be found at http://www.chicagoriver.org/projects/clean_water_and_healthy_fish/.

A Key to having a good day on the river is remembering to bring your vehicle keys with you on the water if you are doing your own shuttle or riding the shuttle bus.

Waivers All participants MUST sign a USCA insurance waiver before launching. Parents must also sign for participants under 18. ALL participants MUST sign a waiver at registration.

Dear Friend:

We are very happy to have you participating in the 9th Annual Chicago River Flatwater Classic!

We can think of no better way to see the city and its inhabitants! Be sure to keep an eye out for some of our neighbors, including herons, snakes, turtles and other wildlife.

Please read these important tips and before you get on the river!

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Chicago River Flatwater Classic begins at Clark Park on the North Branch of the Chicago River. The course is approximately 7.25 miles long. Participants paddle downstream on the North Branch to the North Avenue Turning Basin. This year the course will be changed slightly. The course will go along the west side of Goose Island, NOT the east channel as in previous years. The course continues south to Wolf Point, which marks the confluence of the North Branch, the Main Stem, and the South Branch of the Chicago River. The course continues through downtown on the South Branch (to the right) to the Finish at Ping Tom Memorial Park just south of 18th Street.

To accommodate for other boat traffic, paddlers should always stay to the right (west) side of the river. Paddlers who cut corners can be disqualified.

If you need to quit the race for any reason after you have entered the water, please notify a volunteer at a check-point bridge. They will direct you to the nearest safe take out.

FINISH LINE

Floating Dock Volunteers will be on-hand at the Finish line to direct racers to the floating dock where they may remove their boats from the river. Though volunteers will be willing to help, they are not expected to lift paddlers' boats from the water.

Boat Loading 19th St. between the park entrance and Wentworth Ave. will be a Boat Loading Only Zone from 12 noon until 4 p.m.

Canoe Crib The Canoe Crib, a secure storage area, will be available for participants' boats and gear while they take the shuttle bus to collect their cars. Canoe Crib volunteers will provide claim checks for the equipment to be watched. All equipment must be removed before 5:00 p.m.

FREE Ping Tom Memorial Park Parking is provided by the Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation at their lot half a block north of 18th Street on Clark St. Spectators and Finish line fans can park there and take the shuttle to the park just around the corner. Our security firm will be in the lot from 10 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

Awards Ceremony The Awards Ceremony will take place at approximately 3:30 p.m. in Ping Tom Memorial Park. An award will be given for the best-dressed craft, as well.

Please note that alcohol and grills are NOT allowed in Ping Tom Memorial Park. However, you are welcome to bring a picnic and there will be food vendors and some entertainment at the Finish.

T-shirts Finishers can pick up their t-shirts at the Racer tent in Ping Tom Memorial Park.

SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES

The Chicago River is a working river and is used by recreational powerboats, passenger boats, industrial barges, and towboats. It also has long stretches of vertical steel and/or concrete wall and few ladders. Consequently, wearing PFDs (personal flotation devices) is required throughout the entire time participants are on the water. Failure to wear a PFD will result in disqualification. Cushions are not acceptable substitutes for approved PFDs.

- Emergency communication will be available at checkpoint bridges.
- Safety boats will be located on the water throughout the course.
- Please respect the rights and privacy of landowners and residents. There are no rest stops along the course. Landing at any point along the course will result in disqualification.
- First aid will be available at the Start and the Finish.
- By law each craft must carry its own whistle and sounding device.

IMPORTANT SAFETY TIPS

- Steer into wakes and waves at a 45-degree angle.
- Should you capsize, stay with your boat and gear until help arrives.
- If the Webster Street Aeration Station is working, stay out of the aerated (bubbling) water.
- Stay along the right seawall (west side), especially as you pass through the busy downtown area.
- Please yield the right of way to all motorized river traffic.

SEVERE WEATHER / CANCELLATION

If severe weather is forecast, call the hotline (312) 939-0490 ext. 25, for any cancellation notice.

If the race is underway and a severe weather warning is issued, race officials and volunteer spotters at the bridges will require participants to seek shelter under bridges or get off the river where possible. If the weather allows safe return to the water, the race can be completed. The total elapsed time, including any delay, will be used for award purposes.

In the event of cancellation, the participants will receive their t-shirt and a voucher for a portion of next year's entry fee. However, if the race is canceled, please use your voucher as a tax-deductible contribution to Friends of the Chicago River.

Friends and Family Your friends and family are welcome, in fact encouraged, to watch you paddle or meet you at the Finish in Ping Tom Memorial Park, at 19th Street and Wells. Please note that parking for Ping Tom is on Clark Street (see Ping Tom Parking). Friends and family should be sure to approach the park from 18th Street.

Are you a member of Friends of the Chicago River?

Friends of the Chicago River is the only non-profit organization exclusively dedicated to improving and protecting the Chicago River.

If you join before the race you will get:

- A \$5 discount on your racing fee
- A complimentary copy of *The Chicago River through Your Window*
- And the knowledge that you are part of a regional movement to make the river safe and wonderful for you, your family, your community, and all the plants and animals that call our river home.