



SOUTH ISLAND MASTERS REGATTA 2022

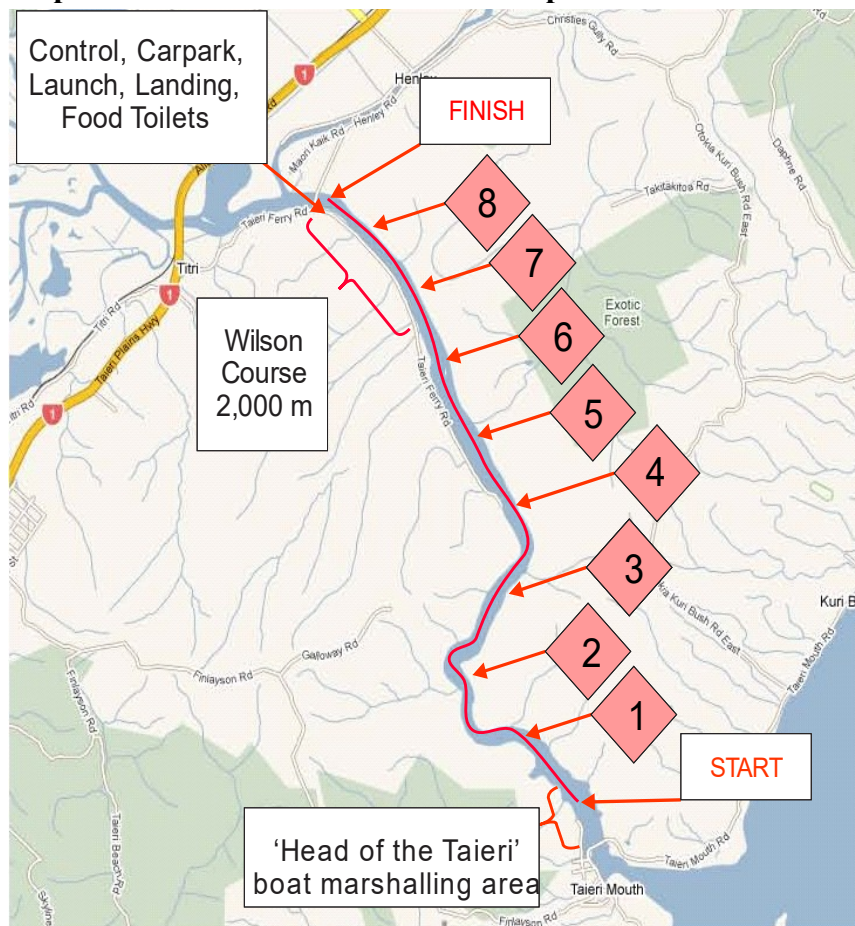
EMERSONS HENLEY UPON TAIERI - BRIDGE TO BRIDGE LONG DISTANCE RACE

INFORMATION FOR COMPETITORS

Introduction

The 'Head of the Taieri' is a processional race, raced off a running start against the clock over a course of 8,500 meters up from the sea at Taieri Mouth, through the Lower Taieri Gorge and up to the old SH1 bridge at Henley (See Map 1).

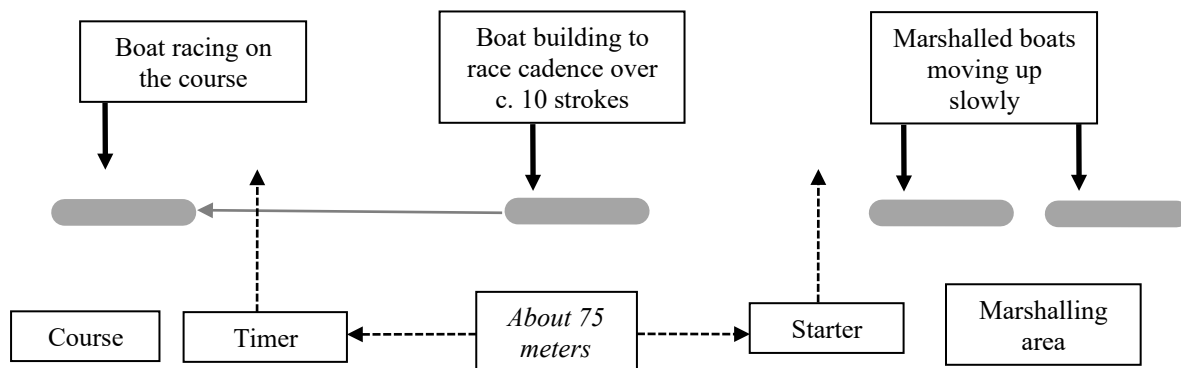
Map 1 – 'Head of the Taieri' course map



Background to Head of the River Races.

Head of the River races are common in the Northern hemisphere and particularly common in the United Kingdom where they form the entirety of the first part of the season running through from September through to late March. 'Head' races, as they are known were introduced and actively promoted in the Nineteen Fifties to extend the period of active club training back through the winter, and to reinforce the idea that this part of the season should be spent largely on sub full pace, steady state endurance training. For this reason 'Heads' have always had three features. They are too long to be sprinted, they are raced off a rolling start, and they are organised so that side by side contact and tactical maneuverings are kept to a minimum during the race – Typically this means that those who are expected to be the fastest crews start first. With regard to at least two of these three factors, 'Heads' differ from the long distance races currently established in the New Zealand rowing calendar that are raced on handicap off a standing start.

Layout of a 'Head of the River' race start



'Head' race starts are somewhat different. They involve a starter and a timer, and they are laid out as above. The competing boats are marshalled into a long column with the (supposedly) fastest crew starting first. Typically the start of the race is signaled by a squib/cannon/horn/starter's pistol, and the column of boats start to move slowly towards the start area. As each boat passes the starter, they call 'Boat number # - Build!'. The boat concerned then builds up to its optimum long distance cadence over some five to ten strokes. The boat should have reached its full speed by the time it passes the timer who will call to the crew 'Boat number # Go!', which informs the crew that their timed run has begun.

The optimal distance between boats as they pass the timer is some four to five boat lengths. If this starts to concertina, the starter may not allow a boat to start until the requisite distance has been achieved. If the boat is brought to a standstill by the starter for this reason, there is no advantage to performing a racing start as the timing will not start until some point beyond the starter. The best way to do well in a head race is to decide in advance what steady rating you are likely to perform best at over the distance, build to it and stick to it.

Features of the Head of the Taieri

1) The Course

The Head of the Taieri is rowed down the lower Taieri Gorge, which must count as one of the most spectacular courses in New Zealand. The first four kilometers are rowed through the gorge itself, which, while it looks alarmingly twisty in the map, is actually very wide and consists of a number of quite considerable straights between the bends. This having been said, a good deal of the shoreline in this early part of the course consists of rocky outcrops that are sure to win a durability contest if pitted against competitors' sculls and skulls! The final five kilometers of the course are straight and are rowed between mud banks. The principal hazard for the unwary here is the island that sits about 3 kilometers from the finish – It is quite soft so only dignity is likely to be injured – but running aground on it will cost a good deal of time! It is very desirable to pass this island on the stroke side of the boat.

The course will be marked on the bow side of the boats every 2-3 kilometers with numbered, diamond shaped 'dayglo' kilometer markers as shown in the Map on Page One. The final marker will be '8' by which time there is only 500 meters to go. The finish will be marked by a sign and a hooter as each competitor crosses.

2) Numbering

All entries received will be allocated a race number. Crews who have entered should send a representative to race control at the boat loading/launching area to pick up their number. The number must be attached to the holder on the bow of the boat. NO NUMBER = NO TIME! Alpha\Numeric Numbers will be used. Crews will be started in alpha/numeric order, starting with number A1, A2, A3 ...B1, B2.... E1, E2...etc.

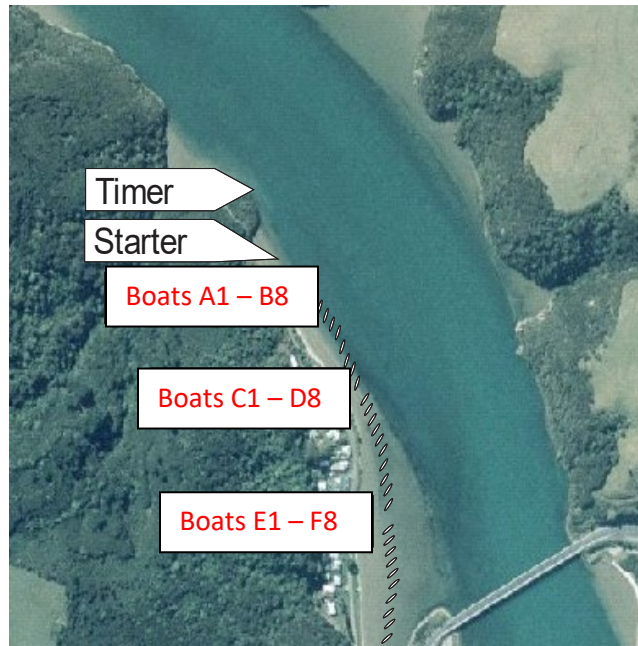
3) Launch and travel to the start

All competitors should be standing by their boats with numbers and ready to go by Noon. Numbers will be available from 11:00am. Once launching starts, crews should launch in reverse number order – ie the slowest first, so that long waits and disorder at the start are avoided. Please cooperate with the launch marshals to achieve this – a rush to launch in a fast quad will lead to a long cold wait! Row steadily down to the start taking note of the course features and markers along the way. Pay particular attention to the island mentioned above and familiarise yourself with the approaches to it. After the last entrant has left for the start that is likely to reach it on time, the chase launch will leave. **FOR SAFETY REASONS NO BOATS WILL BE ALLOWED TO LAUNCH AFTER THIS SAFETY BOAT HAS LEFT**

4) Pre start marshalling

After what seems like a very long time you will come around the last corner and you will see a large concrete bridge ahead of you. This is the end of Taieri and the start of the course. Do not pass through the bridge, the ‘bar’ and the open ocean is not far beyond it. The last 600 meters upstream from the bridge are the marshalling area. An aerial photograph of it is shown in Map 2. The marshalling area is immediately in front of the hard walkable beach that stretches some 500 yards down the southern bank of the river. To assist in getting all boats into their starting order, every 100 meters there will be a sign with an arrow on it showing where sets of boats should lie: e.g. [Boats A1 - B8→]. Use these signs to position yourself in the right place, so if you are boat number A8, you should aim to be about halfway between the signs [Boats A1 - B8→] and [Boats C1 - D8→]. You should also be behind boat number A7 and in front of boat number B1! Try to arrange yourself just off the beach with your bows pointing upstream and slightly out into the stream. Maintaining station will involve some messing about and touching around, but hopefully you will not have to hold this position for long. Map 2 shows boats arranged in a start marshall’s ‘dream scenario’. Help us to make it happen!

Map 2 – Start and marshalling area showing positions of officials and signs.



(The number of groupings will be dependent on entry numbers)

5) The start

Once the column has been marshalled to the Beach Marshall’s satisfaction, and the chase launch arrives to confirm that there are no boats coming down the course, the Beach Marshall will start the race by a horn blast. This will inform everybody that something is about to happen. The head of the column should then start to move off past the starter like a row of cars going past a green light. Your job as a competitor is to keep the line moving smoothly up past the starter by ‘shuffling;’ up the beach towards the starter after the crew in front of you. As you pas the starter they will either hold you or call: ‘Boat number #, build!’ On receipt of this call, build smoothly up to your race cadence and as you pass them, the timer will then call ‘Boat number #, Go!’ – After that it’s up to you. REMEMBER YOU DO NOT HAVE TO STOP FOR THE TIMER.

6) During the race

There are very few rules in a head race (which makes it ideal for Masters!) If all is well, there should be very little bunching. There will, however, always be some overtaking. The rules here are simple: **The boat being overtaken must give way, and should, if necessary, give the necessary calls to allow the overtaking boat to pass them smoothly without losing time.** Safety launches will be posted down the course if disaster strikes.

7) The finish

This is the nice bit. The last kilometer marker is '8'. The finish will be some 500 yards beyond this, and you will be 'honked' as you go over it. Although it will be tempting, please do not collapse completely, continue to paddle (very slowly if necessary) through the red bridge and up to the confluence of the two tributaries about 300 meters beyond that before turning and coming into land. As you come down to land please keep as close to the south (landing) bank as possible so that the finish area is kept clear. As by that time you will have recovered somewhat, be very aware that boats with very tired competitors in them may be crossing the finish line all across the river – it's in your interests to keep a good lookout.

8) The outcome

Time to quench your thirst with some of our sponsor's fine product. A BBQ with an Emmerson's or two will follow on from the racing.

(Adapted from original race plan - R. Hamlin 2012)