

## **Summary of Major Changes to Statutes, Rules of Racing and Event Regulations**

### **2013 FISA Extraordinary Congress**

**15-16 February 2013**

**Copenhagen, Denmark**

On Friday and Saturday 87 delegates from 51 member federations of the World Rowing Association FISA gathered in Copenhagen to consider 49 proposed changes to the Statutes and 89 proposed changes to the Rules of Racing as well as 10 appendices to the Statutes and Rules. The delegates represented 135 total votes. In order to change a statute or rule, a two-thirds majority vote was required which meant 90 votes if all 135 were cast.

#### **Changes in the Statutes**

Demonstrated commitment to rowing – A new requirement was passed which requires candidates for President, Vice President or Treasurer to have competed at the Olympic, Paralympic or World Championship level, or have participated at FISA Congresses at least four times before being allowed to become a candidate. This was approved with 100 votes.

Sixty-five year rule – The proposal of the Hungarian Federation to raise the mandatory retirement rule for Commission members from the current 65 to 70 years of age did not achieve the required two-thirds, receiving 60 votes. The Hungarian Federation had also proposed that the mandatory retirement age for international umpires be raised from 65 to 70, but they withdrew their proposal after this vote.

Para Rowing – The congress passed a change of name for the Adaptive Rowing Commission to “Para Rowing” to better communicate this discipline of rowing to the outside world.

Executive Committee Authority – The Australian Federation withdrew its proposal to grant the Executive Committee additional powers to alter Statutes and Rule of Racing between Extraordinary Congresses. The FISA Council opposed this as a dangerous precedent for the current democracy in FISA.

Autonomy of Member Federations – The Congress passed a new wording of Article 4 which deals with the Autonomy of member Federations. The new wording more clearly specifies that FISA’s member federations shall be autonomous and organised democratically, and authorises FISA powers to take appropriate measures when it determines that these principles are being compromised.

Code of Ethics – The Congress voted unanimously to create a FISA Code of Ethics based on generally recognised ethical principles including the principles of the IOC Code of Ethics.

Integrity in Competition – The Congress also passed unanimously a new article dealing with any attempts to manipulate competition in the sport. A new appendix specifies all circumstances in which this might occur.

#### **Changes to the Rules**

Technical Delegates – A new Rule was approved which more clearly specifies the role of Technical Delegate for International events.

Eligibility – New wording to the Rule 16 was introduced to prevent sudden changes in nationality. The new rule provides that an athlete must miss two years of competition when he or she wants to change his or her nationality. The rule is effective immediately but means that athletes will use this year to establish their competition nationality and then after this year, if they want to compete for another nation, must sit out two competition seasons. This change passed with 129 votes out of the possible 135.

Pre-competition Health Screening – In order to reduce the chance of Sudden Cardiovascular Death in Sport, the Congress passed a mandatory Pre-competition Health Screening for all rowers competing at the top international level. This rule takes effect from 1 January 2014 and requires the member federations to only enter athletes having undertaken this examination. The screening follows the guidelines of the International Olympic Committee and will be specified in the Bye-Laws.

Lightweight Averaging – The Congress rejected the proposal of the Council to eliminate lightweight averaging in order to establish a system in which each athlete is responsible for his own weight, and not have to undergo sudden weight loss due to a teammate just before the race. Many delegates expressed the opinion that the current system of averaging allows a wider spectrum of participation in this category which might be lost if there is only one weight limit. The vote was 62 in favour of the change and 72 against.

Masters Rowers – The Congress created a new age category in masters rowing for those over the age of 85. More and more, the masters regattas have rowers in their 90s so a category for them was needed.

Women's Four – The Congress voted strongly in favour of adding back the Women's Four to the World Championship programme with a vote of 125, far above the required 90. The Women's Four was removed after the 2011 World Championships when less than seven crews were entered over a period of three years. In a related vote, the proposal to eliminate the Men's Coxed Pair was rejected by the Congress. The Canadian proposal for adding a lightweight women's single to the Olympic programme was withdrawn.

Additional Para Rowing boat – The Congress approved the Council proposal to add a new boat, the Legs, Trunk and Arms Mixed Double Scull (LTAMix2x), to the World Rowing Championship programme. This would allow member federations another boat for the category with the largest talent pool.

Para Rowing Distance – The Congress narrowly rejected a proposal from the Council to standardise the Paralympic rowing distance to 2,000 metres from the current 1,000 metres. The vote was 85 in favour and 44 against which meant that 66% per cent of the votes cast supported the proposal but it did not achieve the required 67%. This would have fully integrated Para Rowing with able-bodied rowing ending the requirement for additional costly infrastructure and gaps in the racing programme. Those speaking against the proposal stated their worries that this distance would discourage athletes from entering the sport, particularly in the single sculls for those with the more substantial disabilities.

Balanced Semi-finals – The Australian proposal which would allow the FISA Executive Committee to choose the most balanced semi-final configuration from among the two possible options was passed. This was raised after two significant semi-finals in the recent past in which a totally random selection resulted in the anti-climax of having the gold and silver medallists racing each other both in the semis and in the finals.

No more Breakage Rule in the first 100 metres – The Congress approved the French and German Federations' proposal to eliminate the 100 metre breakage rule. This proposal arose following a controversial stoppage in the lightweight men's double sculls in London when a crew stopped rowing claiming damage according to this rule. The race was stopped and all crews had to return to the start for a new start. Many delegates expressed the view that the standard of equipment now is of a high standard when compared to the past when boats were made of wood and the outriggers were welded metal.

Dead Heats – A new wording for reducing the need to re-row a race following a dead heat was adopted. If the difference between two crews at the finish is not able to be determined, the jury would look at previous rounds in the regatta and would advance the crew with the better prior results, similar to a "count back" used in other sports. Having to re-row a race adds additional fatigue to the rowers and puts them at a disadvantage when facing the other crews in the next round.

Medical provisions – A series of new Bye-Laws were added related to medical provisions. They included the Pre-competition Health Screening requirement, the requirement that each member federation have a medical officer for confidential medical communications, the ban on intravenous re-hydration for lightweights between weighing and racing, the no-needle policy which was adopted in 2011 and a clause about gender re-assignment and hyperandrogenism.

### **Other issues**

The Council presented wordings for ten appendices for the Rule Book which related to the Code of Ethics, Manipulation of Competition, the requirements for international Regatta Courses, Advertising Rules, the progression system for World Championships and World Cups, Anti-Doping, Event Regulations, Regulations for Para-Rowing and Coastal Rowing as well as requirements for becoming an international umpire.

A British Federation proposal to fix all finals of a World Rowing Junior Championship on the last day was supported by a strong majority. Starting in 2014, this will be the case at the World Rowing Junior Championships.