



18 Market Place
Bingham
Nottingham NG13 8AP
Tel. 0845 - 370 9500
Fax. 0845 - 370 9501
Email - info@bcu.org.uk
membership@bcu.org.uk
coaching@bcu.org.uk
Website - www.bcu.org.uk

Jean Michel Prono
Chairman
ICF Canoe Slalom Committee
Avenue de Rhodanie 54,
CH 1007 Lausanne,
Switzerland.

10 March 2008

Dear Jean Michel

BCU RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION REGARDING PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CANOE SLALOM RULES

I am pleased to attach the British Canoe Unions position with regard to the proposed changes to the Canoe Slalom International Rules.

This paper replaces all previous contributions and in particular the two documents submitted by Mr John Macloed on Thursday 6 March and Saturday 8 March are formally withdrawn.

For further information or in the case of query please contact the undersigned

Yours sincerely

Paul W. Owen
Secretary General

CC: Simon Toulson ICF Secretary General
Albert Woods BCU President & ICF Board Member
John Anderson BCU Performance Director
Ann Hounslow Chair BCU Slalom Committee

“Helping & inspiring people to go canoeing”

British Canoe Union. Registered in England as a company limited by guarantee without a share capital. Reg No. 1525484
Registered office: 18 Market Place, Bingham, Nottingham, NG13 8AP

Slalom Committee Response to ICF Rule Change Proposals

The views expressed below are the opinion of the British Canoe Union Slalom Committee, formed after examination of the 'public' responses plus World Class responses and in depth discussion at the Committee meeting on the 23rd February, 2008. The Slalom Committee fully supports the ICF's ambition to make the sport fairer and more understandable to the spectator. We also fully support increased participation and more international racing opportunities.

1.0 This Committee supports the proposed changes to the World Ranking system.

We feel that these proposals would increase the quality of international racing and allow more top quality athletes to compete on the world stage.

2.1 This Committee does not support the introduction of an 'Extreme' slalom race.

2.2 This Committee does not support the removal of semi finals from the World Championship and Olympic Programmes

We do not, however, oppose changes to the format of progression at international competitions.

We are against the 'extreme slalom' proposal for several reasons;

We reject the idea of having a 'combined' Olympic medal. We do not think that this proposal would simplify the event for spectators. They would watch a race and would not see a medal awarded to the winner of that race i.e. the winner of the 'extreme' race would not necessarily be Olympic Champion.

We also believe this idea would be to the detriment of the athletes. An 'extreme' race, by its very nature would almost certainly throw up some unexpected results. Having such a result combined with a 'classic' race would open up the possibility of a boat winning the Olympic title without having stepped onto the podium in either leg of the combined event. We think this would devalue the Olympic title. We believe that if extra Olympic medals were to be made available then this idea could become viable (see point 5.)

We understand that canoe slalom already rates very highly on Olympic viewing figures and so we do not believe that such a change is needed. Our sport is already successfully attracting viewers, and then there is not a need to change a good formula.

Should the ICF adopt this format, the marketing of an 'extreme' race would almost certainly jeopardize the standing and reputation of the 'classic' slalom format. We feel that many spectators would turn away from a 'classic' format in favour of the 'extreme' category. Perhaps another form of words could be used to describe the events e.g. 'Giant Slalom' and 'Slalom'.

Additionally, the Semi Final races add to the excitement and attraction of the event. Often television does not cover the heats and the deletion of semi finals may cause TV only to cover Finals thus reducing the overall television coverage of our sport.

3.1 This Committee does not support the reduction of the 2 second penalty.

3.2 This Committee supports the introduction of single pole gates.

Evidence suggests that it is still possible to get an international podium position with one or more two second penalties. When 5 second penalties were abolished, it was almost impossible to podium with a gate touch. That is not the case at the moment and so we cannot see the need for this change.

The introduction of 1 second penalties would increase difficulties with judging. We believe that there would be more deliberate displacement situations with 1 second touches, as there would be a much finer balance between clearing a gate conservatively and deliberately displacing a gate with a faster line. Deliberate displacements are hard to judge and with more technically difficult courses (let alone an 'extreme' course) this situation would happen more and more frequently. Also, in C2 category, a one second penalty would invite these deliberate displacements, as the time losses for more conservative moves are proportionally larger.

We believe the introduction of single pole gates will be greatly beneficial. It will simplify course construction and judging. But, we are against the abolition of gate touches subsequently, as we cannot conceive of a rigid gate system that would not be potentially dangerous to the athletes or extremely complex and costly.

4.0 This Committee is not convinced regarding the introduction of Canoe Singles for Women category.

We support any efforts to increase gender equality in our sport. A C1W category might be one way of achieving this. We believe great care would be needed to guard against the following situations;

The top women athletes start to compete in both classes, diluting and hence, retarding the technical development of both, as they cannot fully focus their attention on a single class. Or, some women specialize in one class, decreasing participation and depth in the other.

Some concerns re physiological development of Women in C1.

We think that the ICF's efforts would be better served developing and supporting strategies to increase female participation in slalom generally and then introducing more categories. It would be difficult to see a real incentive for women to commit to C1W without the introduction of a C1W Olympic medal (see point 5).

5.0 This Committee would like there to be serious consideration of allocating more Olympic medals for Slalom.

In our opinion, the best way to increase spectator numbers, promote gender equality and increase the attractiveness of canoe slalom would be to increase the number of medal categories at the Olympics, and by extension, at all major international races. If there were more medals available, there could be 'Giant Slalom', 'Slalom' or 'Combined' medals and/or more women's categories. If more medals were made available, there could be serious discussion as to what future direction slalom could be taken in. Without more medals, any rule changes are cosmetic in nature and not really addressing the needs of canoe slalom participants or supporters

Anne Hounslow
Chair of British Canoe Union Slalom Committee