

Preliminary information for the 2026 United Rafting season

Dear sports friends,

in this transitional phase towards the merger, we are working quickly to provide you with all relevant information for the 2026 sporting season. The first bulletins, including the one for the Junior and U23 World Championships, will be published shortly.

In the meantime, we are sharing this document, which provides an overview of the key eligibility, participation, and team composition rules that will govern United Rafting competitions. It is intended to serve as a preparatory guide for athletes, teams, and National Federations ahead of the official publication of the United Rafting Sport Rules, which will be released in the coming days.

The rules outlined herein cover eligibility criteria, National and Club Team participation, divisions, age categories, and team composition requirements. While they provide a comprehensive framework, the final and authoritative regulations will be established in the forthcoming Sport Rules document.

We thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

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International Rafting Federation

Matteo Benciolini
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United Rafting recognizes that the sport of rafting comprises competitive activities characterized by differing technical, environmental and organizational features. In order to ensure clarity, consistency and international uniformity in the conduct of competitions, United Rafting formally establishes two international competition formats: the Classic Format and the Adventure Format.

Classic Format

Competitions conducted under the Classic Format may include, individually or in combination, the following disciplines:

- a) Sprint;
- b) Rafting Cross (RX);
- c) Slalom.

Adventure Format

Competitions conducted under the Adventure Format shall include, individually or in combination, the following disciplines:

- a) Sprint;

- b) Head-to-Head (H2H);
- c) Slalom;
- d) Downriver.

Classification of competitions

Competitions organized within the framework of United Rafting are classified as follows:

Class A

Classic World Championships;
Adventure World Championships;

Class B

Classic Continental Championships;
Classic or Adventure World Cup events;

Class C

Classic or Adventure Continental Cups;
International competitions recognized by United Rafting;

Class D

National Championships;

Class E

National events recognized by National Federation;
Local or regional events recognized by the National Federation.

Competitions classified under Class A, Class B, and Class C shall be sanctioned by United Rafting, in accordance with the present Regulations and the applicable Event Requirements Handbook.

Competitions classified under Class D (National Championships) shall be sanctioned by the respective National Federation, which shall notify the United Rafting Secretary of the event dates within the timelines established by United Rafting.

National Championships may be reclassified as Class C international events where such competitions are formally opened to international teams. Such reclassification shall be subject to prior written application by the relevant National Federation and formal approval by United Rafting.

Upon approval, the event shall assume the official designation “Open of [Name of the Country]” and shall be governed by the rules applicable to Class C competitions.

Competitions classified under Class E) shall be sanctioned by the respective National Federation.

Eligibility and participation

All United Rafting National Members are entitled to participate in international competitions.

Only athletes holding a valid national membership for the current calendar year, issued by their respective National Federation, may participate in competitions.

In order to participate in Class A), B), C) and D) events, all athletes and para-athletes must hold a valid United Rafting Athlete License, in accordance with the provisions set out in the annual official communication published by United Rafting.

The United Rafting Athlete License does not replace the national membership requirement, unless otherwise expressly stipulated by the relevant National Federation.

Participation in competitions is strictly prohibited for any individual or United Rafting Member who is subject to a suspension, disqualification or declaration of *persona non grata*, imposed by a United Rafting judicial body or by any other international authority recognized by United Rafting.

National Teams

Classic World Championships and Classic Continental Championships are competitions reserved exclusively for National Teams.

National Teams must be entered in such events by the National Secretariat or other duly authorized bodies of the respective National Federations. Specific provisions apply to teams participating under the Developing Program.

Athletes selected for National Teams shall be chosen through transparent selection procedures, based on objective criteria established by the respective National Federations. Such criteria shall be communicated to the athletes well in advance of the relevant competitions.

Any competitor participating in the Classic World Championships or Classic Continental Championships must be a national of the country of the National Federation entering that competitor.

A competitor who holds the nationality of two or more countries simultaneously may elect to represent any one of them. However, once a competitor has represented a country in the Classic World Championships or Classic Continental Championships, they may not represent another country within the same calendar year. From the following calendar year onward, subject to written notification to United Rafting no later than 31 December, the competitor may request authorization to represent the other country of nationality. Upon approval, the competitor shall represent that country for a minimum period of three (3) consecutive years. Each Delegation shall appoint a Head of Delegation and a Vice-Head of Delegation, both of whom shall be duly accredited for the Event.

Club Teams

All competitions other than the Classic World Championships and the Classic Continental Championships shall be events reserved for Club Teams.

Club Teams must be affiliated with or recognized by their respective National Federation.

In order to participate in Class A, B, and C events, Club Teams must hold a valid United Rafting Club Licence, in accordance with the provisions set out in the annual official communication published by United Rafting. Athletes competing as members of a Club Team may be of different nationalities; however, all athletes must hold a valid national membership for the current calendar year issued by the National Federation with which the Club Team is affiliated or recognized.

Each Club Team shall appoint a Team Captain, who shall be duly accredited for the Event.

Division

Competitions shall be organized in the following recognized divisions: Men, Women, Mixed and Para-Rafting. The divisions scheduled for the event shall be specified in the official Event Bulletin.

Teams entered in the Women's Division shall be composed exclusively of female athletes. For competitions held in Class A and Class B, teams entered in the Men's Division shall be composed exclusively of male athletes.

The Mixed Division is permitted exclusively in the R4 category. Teams entered in this division shall be composed of two (2) male athletes and two (2) female athletes plus one (1) male or female reserve athlete. In all cases, a minimum of two (2) female athletes and one (1) male athlete shall be at all times in the raft during the competitions.

The Para-Rafting Division is permitted exclusively in the R4 category. Teams entered in this division shall be composed, regardless of gender, of two (2) para-athletes, in accordance with the applicable eligibility criteria, and two (2) additional non-para-athletes, plus one (1) reserve athlete, who may be a para-athlete or a non-para-athlete. In all cases, a minimum of two (2) para-athletes and one (1) non-para-athlete shall be at all times in the raft during the competitions.

Competitors are permitted to race in more than one Division during a single Event if they meet the qualification requirements. In all instances, the competitor must comply with all race rules and requirements. No race shall be delayed or rescheduled to accommodate the Competitor.

Team composition

Teams must be composed of 4 athletes for R4 category rafts or 6 athletes for R6 category rafts, distributed according to age groups and respecting the following limitations.

Each R6 Team or R4 Team is permitted one Reserve, who must be registered as a Team Member prior to the start of the Event.

The final 7 (R6) or 5 (R4) Team Members cannot be changed after they are officially registered at the Event. Until the time of accreditation, in the case of a documented injury and upon payment of the registration fee, a substitution may be requested.

Age categories

Competitors may participate in a United Rafting Event in the calendar year in which they turn 15 years old. For Class C or D Level events, underage Competitors may participate only if approved by the National Federation of the host nation. In such cases, the venue must be age-appropriate and all necessary safety precautions must be implemented.

An athlete may compete in a United Rafting Event during the calendar year in which they reach the age of 14, provided that the Event Bulletin expressly states that the course includes no rapids exceeding Class III. In Class A, B) and C) events, no more than one 14-year-old athlete may be permitted in the same raft.

A Competitor who is legally defined as a Minor (typically a person under the age of 18) must comply with all domestic laws and regulations applicable to Minors at the Event and must be supervised by an adult (Team/Delegation Member) who assumes full responsibility. National Federations shall ensure that their Competitors comply with all laws and regulations governing Minors in their home country.

Athletes are divided into the following age categories:

- Junior (U19): athletes are eligible to compete in the Junior category if they are 19 or younger on 31 December of the calendar year in which the competition takes place. An Under 19 team must consist exclusively of athletes within this age group. Athletes in the Under 19 category may also compete, individually or as a complete team, in the Under 23 or Senior categories. Regardless of age, athletes competing in the Under 23 or Senior categories will be classified in that category;
- Under 23 (U23): athletes are eligible to compete in the U23 category if they are 23 or younger on 31 December of the calendar year in which the competition takes place. An Under 23 team must consist exclusively of athletes within this age group. Athletes in the Under 23 category may also compete, individually or as a complete team, in the Senior category. Regardless of age, athletes competing in the Senior category will be classified in that category;
- Senior: athletes are eligible to compete in the Senior category if they are 15 or older on 31 December of the calendar year in which the competition takes place;
- Master: athletes are eligible to compete in the Senior category if they are 40 or older on 31 December of the calendar year in which the competition takes place. Only athletes within this age group may participate in the Master category.