



ERCU 2026 RACING RULES

(Adopted 1/5/2026)

PROLOGUE

The goal of Electric Radio Controlled Unlimiteds (ERCU) is to replicate the look and competition of real unlimited hydroplane racing. Boats are 1/10-scale and 1/7-scale replicas of the real boats that have attempted to qualify on the unlimited circuit. The club will emphasize scale appearance accuracy and quality workmanship as well as enjoyable competition on the water. As with the real boats, the races will be run counterclockwise on the course.

POLICY AND INTENT

Guidelines offered in this rulebook are subject to the term “spirit and intent” and apply to the technical aspects of model boat racing as well as to the actions of drivers, crew members, owners, officials, and contest directors. It is expected that all participants will adhere to the spirit and intent of these rules.

These are guidelines for fair and equitable competition. They are not the basis to “read between the lines” to circumvent the intent. The “spirit and intent” clause allows the Referee to make decisions and resolve disputes in a timely manner. If you are contemplating a technical undertaking that is not directly addressed in these rules, please contact the Contest Board to make sure it is legal and will be allowed.

DISCLAIMER

These rules shall govern all Electric Radio Controlled Unlimiteds (ERCU) sanctioned or promoted events and, by participation in these events, all entrants are deemed to have understood and complied with these rules. No express or implied warranty of safety shall result from publication of, or compliance with, these rules and regulations. They are intended as a guide for the conduct of the sport and are in no way a guarantee against injury or death to participants, spectators, or others.

A. RACE RULES

- I. All race rules and driving rules apply at all times on race day.
 - a. Races will begin with a drivers' meeting held no later than 30 minutes prior to the announced start.
 - b. All boats and drivers must be registered prior to the driver's meeting.
 - c. Drivers must be present at the drivers' meeting to run in the first flight of heats.
 - d. Drivers arriving after the first flight is drawn may participate, starting with the second flight
- II. Each driver must possess proof of current North American Model Boat Association (NAMBA) membership at every race when registering.
- III. Drivers must maintain their lane and leave enough room for other boats on the racecourse.
 - a. The referee has the discretion to issue warnings, lap penalties, or heat/race disqualifications, based on the severity of a driving infraction.
- IV. When another boat is overtaking your own, you shall maintain your lane and not try to get out of the way.
 - a. It is the responsibility of the overtaking boat to make the pass safely.
- V. Drivers shall always have a NAMBA member spotter when their boat is on the course.
 - a. The spotter will inform the driver of race conditions, count laps, and assist the judges in calling out "dead boat" status.
 - i. The spotter shall verbally call out the number of laps and hold up fingers for the chief referee to audibly and visually recognize a driver's completed laps
 - b. This provision applies to pre-race testing also to conform to NAMBA Safety Rules.
 - c. Except for rookies, one spotter may assist up to two drivers.
 - d. As a courtesy to others, drivers and spotters shall remain on the scaffolding (or drivers area) until all boats have completed their race.
- VI. Three preliminary heats plus consolation and final heats shall constitute a race. The lone exception is the ERCU Gold Cup (see: Gold Cup Rules)
- VII. Officials: The official judges for each heat will consist of a chief referee and two turn judges.
 - a. The chief referee is the sole authority for the conduct of the heat, with the turn judges assisting the chief referee with their calls.
 - b. Turn judges shall be the first and second place finishers from the previous heat. If they are not available, it is their responsibility to send a replacement to turn judge for them.
- VIII. Officials' calls are final.
- IX. All disputes MUST be handled through the Drivers Representative and NEVER through direct contact with officials.
 - a. A driver may ask the drivers rep for an explanation of a call, but at no time will an official listen to an argument.
 - b. Failure to comply with this requirement shall be considered unsportsmanlike conduct and may be penalized as appropriate.
 - c. The driver's rep will not seek to overturn a call but will seek explanation for the call, and communicate that to the driver who requested the drivers rep.
- X. All heats will be five laps run in a counterclockwise direction. *If a race course is deemed too large for 1/10 scale, then 1/10 scales may run four laps.* At the discretion of the chief referee a heat may be reduced to three completed laps if only a single boat remains running.
- XI. A one minute, thirty second audio countdown clock will be used to start each heat. The start of the race is at the beginning of the sound of the horn/gun.
- XII. A boat must be in the water and commence running no later than the 30-second mark on the

- countdown and may not be touched inside the 30-second mark.
- a. Violation of this rule results in a DNS (Did Not Start) for that heat
- XIII. Once running, a boat must remain in constant forward motion.
- a. Any boats stopping or coming off plane on the course or in the infield after the 30-second mark and before the start shall be assessed a one lap penalty.
- XIV. The “mill start” will be used in which all boats must fully circle the right and left turns (in that order) before being allowed to enter the infield.
- a. No boat may cut the course after the clock strikes five seconds
 - b. After the five second mark, any boat that crosses the starting line before the clock is at zero has not started and must round the full course to make a start.
 - c. Cutting directly across the course from the pit area at any time, excluding qualifying and time trials attempts, is a one lap penalty.
 - d. The infield can be entered prior to the five second mark prior to the start only between the exit buoy of the left turn and the entry buoy to the right turn.
 - e. Entry into the infield at any other location is a one lap penalty.
 - f. Boats that have cut the course and are re-entering the racecourse from the infield must do so only onto the back stretch between the exit buoy of the right turn and the entry buoy to the left turn and must yield right of way to boats on the course. Failure to do either is a one-lap penalty.
 - g. If a buoy is missed during the mill, a penalty lap can be avoided by once again fully circling the right and left turn in order.
- XV. A one-lap penalty shall be assessed if a boat cuts inside any buoy or when more than 50 percent of a boat jumps inside/over a buoy, or a buoy is dislodged or destroyed.
- a. No penalty shall be assessed for a boat that touches a buoy on the outside (less than 50 percent) causing no damage or displacement.
- XVI. Disqualification will occur upon the third penalty in any heat.
- XVII. All boats must maintain a straight line from the exit pin to the starting line at the beginning of a heat or be assessed a one-lap penalty.
- XVIII. Circling the infield after the start of the race will result in a one-lap penalty.
- a. Boats having completed the required number of laps for a finish shall immediately enter the infield from the backstretch and park until all boats have finished or instructed by referee to return to the pits. Failure to do so is disqualification from the heat.
- XIX. Stoppages and Restarts:
- a. The Chief Referee may stop a heat at any time for any reason.
 - b. Boats and/or drivers that are responsible for a heat stoppage shall not be allowed to participate in a re-start of that heat.
 - c. Boats and or drivers failing to start a heat that has been stopped together with those not running (for any reason) at the time of the stoppage shall be allowed to participate in the restart of the stopped heat.
 - d. Boats and or drivers that are responsible for a heat stoppage citing safety as their reason for calling for a stoppage shall be allowed to participate in the restart only if the condition cited by the individual responsible for the stoppage is ratified by the Referee as a valid safety concern warranting a heat stoppage.
- XX. In the case of ties, the highest accumulated season points during the current racing season between the boats involved will determine which boat will advance. For the first race of the year, the previous season’s total high points for the boats involved will be used.

B. DEAD BOAT RULES

- I. The definition of a dead boat is “a boat on the course that is not moving, as called by a judge”.

- II. Spotters must alert their driver if a boat spins out or stops on the racecourse.
 - a. The call should state: "dead boat" and the location (right turn, left turn, back stretch or front stretch) of the dead boat, with an estimation of what lane the boat is in.
- III. Heat judges will make the official "dead boat" call.
- IV. If two boats are stuck together and called dead, they must remain dead until the heat is complete.
- V. All boats will be given five minutes to finish a heat, following the finish of the first boat.
- VI. Striking a called dead boat at any time during the race day will result in disqualification for the striking boat and the driver for the remainder of the race, and MAY be fined up to \$75
 - a. The race referee, at his discretion, may reduce the penalty to disqualification from the heat if conditions warrant (i.e.: Inadvertent action, not enough time to respond, difficult to see, minor damage to struck boat, etc.).
 - b. If the offense occurs during the final heats of the day (consolations or final heat) the driver and offending boat will be disqualified for that day, and lose all points earned prior to the penalty.
 - c. Disqualification under this rule means the driver is disqualified from driving ANY boat for the remainder of the event.
 - i. If said driver also has a registered boat(s) in other classes, he or she may "hire" a replacement driver to drive that/those boat(s) in the remaining heats of the event.
 - ii. In the instance that a driver is disqualified for hitting a called dead boat, that driver will be required to start his or her next three heats as a trailer.

C. COLLISION RULES

- I. The definition of a collision is "contact between two boats that impedes the progress of one boat by another and/or causes visual damage (broken or missing parts, hull cracks) before and during a heat, or any time two boats are on the water at the same time.
- II. A boat that strikes another boat, causing it to not finish the heat, will be disqualified.
- III. If a boat is taken out of a heat in a collision or because of a penalty on another boat, the offended boat will be awarded 169 points as compensation.
- IV. If a boat is off plane, the driver must yield to other boats before trying to re-enter the racecourse, to not interfere with the progress of other boats.
- V. Interference will result in a one-lap penalty.

D. CONSOLATION AND FINAL HEAT RULES

- I. To participate in a consolation heat or final heat, it is a prerequisite that a boat score points in a preliminary heat.
- II. A trailer boat for the final heat is determined by a consolation heat.
 - a. After the top six boats are determined by total points for the day, the next six boats are eligible for the first consolation heat.
 - b. If any of the six boats are not able to compete, the boat with the next highest point total can enter the heat.
 - c. If 15 or more boats are entered in the race, a second consolation heat will be held, if at least three boats are able to start.
 - d. All heats will be filled to six boats if there are enough qualified entries.
- III. Consolation heats are run for partial points per the table in the race points section of the General Rules.

- a. The winner of a consolation heat may forfeit the points earned to enter as a trailer in the next heat.
 - b. If a driver chooses to decline advancing to keep the points, the option to advance is given to the second-place boat in the consolation heat.
- IV. Second place in the first consolation heat becomes the alternate for the final.
- V. The trailer boat may move up to the front line only if one of the regular starters is not in the water by the 30-second mark of the countdown prior to the start of the heat or if one of the regular boats is called a dead boat and is not able to start.
- VI. An alternate boat must be in the water prior to the one-minute mark of the countdown.
 - a. The alternate may start as a trailer but must immediately pull off the course if all other boats in the heat make a legal start.

E. DRIVING RULES

- I. Drivers may clear their propellers during a heat only when determined by the officials that conditions may warrant this exemption.