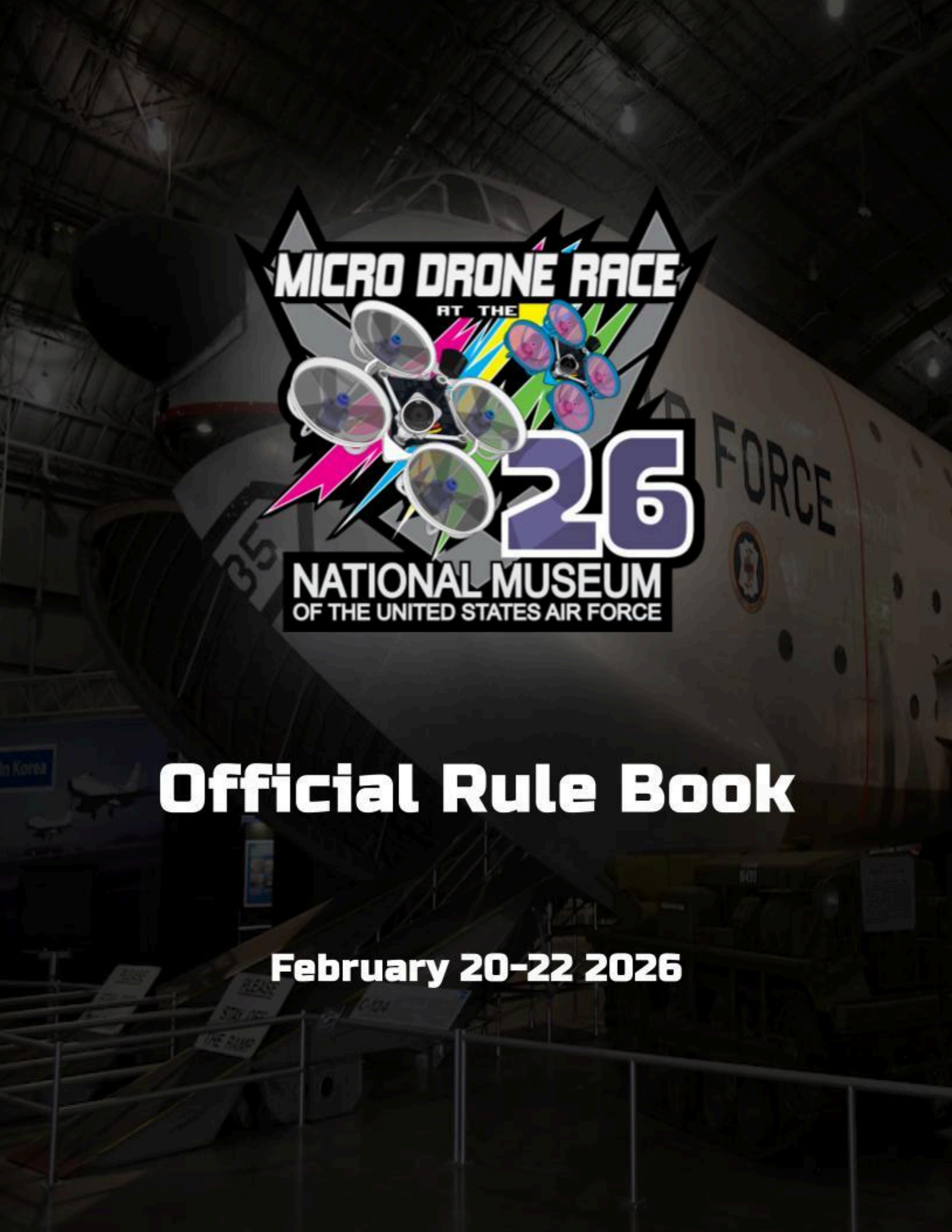


Official Rule Book

February 20-22 2026



This document is heavily inspired by the rules created and used at Whooptopia. Massive thank you to Anthony Knight and his team for allowing us to borrow key elements of their rule set that have proven successful at Whooptopia year after year.

MICRO DRONE RACE
'26
NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Purpose of Documentation

This document is intended to provide attending pilots, spotters, and spectators with clear expectations for how the 2026 Micro Drone Race at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force will be run.

This event is designed to create a fun, competitive, positive atmosphere, and ultimately a professional showcase of micro drone racing competition to thousands of spectators, young and old, who will be in attendance in the Museum Hangar as well as online.

As ambassadors for our sport, it is important for all participants to act in a dignified manner and treat their fellow pilots with respect at all times.

This document will cover all of the official rules and requirements for participation in the event.

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1. Permission to Fly in the Museum

The Cincinnati Quad Racers have a strict agreement with the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in order to be able to host this event. The clauses of this agreement are listed below and must be followed at all times with zero exceptions.

1.1 Aircraft Flown

All aircraft flown under the discretion of the Cincinnati Quad Racers in their event must adhere to the requirements below:

- 65mm wheelbase (diagonal, motor shaft to motor shaft) frame only
- Frame made from plastic only (no stiffener or base plate made from carbon fiber or any other material)
- Each propeller must be fully enclosed in a “duct” (defined as a circular guard completely surrounding each propeller).
- 1S Battery Only - Must be purchased from a reputable manufacturer (no homemade cells) and charged to a maximum voltage of 4.35v
- 25 Gram maximum dry weight (weight without battery)

1.2 Event Area

The “event area” is defined as the restricted zone within the Hangar space where spectators and museum visitors are prohibited from entering. This includes the roped-off pilot area, stage platform area, and the exhibit space enclosing the C-124 Globemaster and F-82 Twin Mustang aircraft.

Pilots are permitted only to fly within this zone. Flying outside the event area is not allowed at any time.

The race course will be constructed within this zone with a reasonable safety margin from event area boundaries and spectator areas.

If at any time an aircraft departs the event area, it is to immediately turn back and re-enter the area as soon and safely as possible, or land immediately.

1.3 Pilot Authorization

Only ticketed participants of the 2026 Micro Drone Race at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force are permitted to fly in the museum area.

1.4 Unauthorized Flight

Any sUAS flight that is conducted in violation of the requirements above (1.1-1.3) will be considered unauthorized. Unauthorized flight will follow the policy set forth by the Museum in the FAQ section on their website:

"As a government facility located on federal property the museum adheres to Wright-Patterson AFB policy on drones. As such, the use of small Unmanned Aerial Systems (sUAS) on museum grounds is strictly prohibited. This included drones and model remote control aircraft. Unauthorized sUAS flights are immediately reported to security forces."

1.5 Limitation of Liability

Participants of the Micro Drone Race at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force recognize that it is their responsibility to operate their aircraft in a safe and controlled manner. In the event an aircraft leaves the flight area, whether intentional or not, the pilot in command is responsible for any injury or damage it may cause to museum visitors or their property.

1.6 Lithium Battery Safety

All lithium batteries brought into the museum must be stored in an appropriate LiPo-Safe bag or container when not in use. A fire extinguisher and metal battery disposal can will be kept in a central location within the event area.

If at any time a battery fire occurs, The battery is to be moved to an open area, or brought to the red fireproof can. Please alert a nearby race official or museum staff member. Do not run towards the exit with the battery. Any active race will be stopped and restarted after the situation is resolved.

No homemade lithium batteries of any kind are allowed at the event (including purchased cells soldered together).

1.7 Failure to Comply

Failure to comply with the rules listed in this section will result in removal from the event.

1.8 Museum Entry

All entrants into the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force are required to pass through a metal detector. Bags brought into the Museum are subject to search and/or X-Ray screening. Please observe the prohibited items list below:

- Firearms*
- Knives
- Box cutters
- Food and Soda Drinks
- Alcohol/Illicit Substances
- Coolers

* Firearms, to include conceal carry and other dangerous weapons, are specifically prohibited in Federal facilities in accordance with 18 USC §930 ©

2. Aircraft Spec Requirements

2.1 Frame Specifications

65mm wheelbase frame with full ducting only. Plastic only, no carbon fiber or other material stiffeners/plates.

2.2 Propeller Specifications

31mm or 35mm Propellers only. These may be bi-blades, tri-blades, or quad-blade propellers.

2.3 Motor Specifications

Brushed or Brushless motors of your choosing. Brushless is highly recommended. No minimum or maximum KV requirements.

2.4 Battery Specifications

- 1S Battery Only - Must be purchased from a reputable manufacturer (no homemade cells) and charged to a maximum voltage of 4.35v.

2.5 Camera Specifications

Pilots may use any camera of their choosing. (Analog / HDZero only).

2.6 Weight Specifications

25 Gram maximum dry weight (before battery)

2.7 Antenna Specifications

Circular Polarized (CP) antennas are required at this event. Popular options include but are not limited to: TrueRC/Tiny Whoop Smol, TrueRC Singularity, Happymodel Crown, VAS Micro Switchblade. Modification of any antenna is prohibited. Antennas will be checked during tech inspection and at random when on the starting blocks. Attempts to bypass, bend, or cheat this antenna rule may result in disqualification from the event at the race director's discretion.

2.8 VTX Specifications

All pilots must transmit at 25mW at all times.

2.9 OSD Requirements

Please refrain from adding anything inappropriate to your OSD as we would like to keep the event family friendly for all spectators in attendance. Pilots who do not comply with this rule will be required to change their OSD settings before being allowed to participate.

2.10 Battery Connector Safety

Battery connectors may not be modified in any way that allows the potential for accidental reverse-polarity connection.

Directly soldering batteries to the aircraft is also not permitted.

3. Pre-Competition Requirements

3.1 Tech Inspection

Each aircraft is required to undergo a complete tech inspection prior to flight to ensure it not only meets the above mentioned requirements, but also to ensure your aircraft is within the acceptable limitations for the event.

Inspection items include:

- Confirming proper frame size
- Confirming 1s battery only is used
- Confirming the VTX is transmitting on 25mW
- Confirming the pilot is on their assigned channel given
- Confirming CP antenna is used
- Confirming proper battery connectors are in use
- Confirming their whoop provides no risk within the above outlined rule set

4. Participation Guidelines

Participation Guidelines are set in place to ensure the event runs safely and smoothly at all times.

4.1 Guidelines for Pilots/Spotters/Spectators

- Always closely listen and follow any and all instructions provided to the pilot by a race official.
- No one is authorized to walk out onto the course at any given time unless instructed to do so by a race official.
- The flight line is in place to mark where the pilot area ends and the course begins.
- The flight line is never to be crossed by anyone at any given time unless instructed by a race official.
- When a pilot retrieves their aircraft after a race the pilot is to power off their aircraft immediately upon retrieval.

4.2 Pilot Guidelines

- Fly only in designated areas.
- Fly only when you are instructed to fly by a race official.
- When finishing a race the pilot is required to land their aircraft at the designated area advised to you prior to the race.

- When flying the course the pilot is required to fly from the designated flight line only.
- Only power up your aircraft once instructed to do so. No participant should ever power up their aircraft unless they are in a specific heat.
- Proper sportsmanship is critical. As pilots, your conduct represents what micro drone racing is all about for onlooking spectators.
- Pilots must respect those within their heat by not shouting, yelling, crying, and screaming during a heat at any given time. Please wait until the heat has come to completion prior to celebration or complaints. If a pilot fails to comply they may be disqualified for that heat by a race official.
- Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.
- Any participants attempting to win the competition by irregular means will be subject to disqualification.

4.3 Spectator Safety

Spectators must stay outside the event area at all times. There will be several designated course viewing areas around the event area, as well as seating areas with screens for viewing the race.

5. Event Officials

Officials of the Micro Drone Race at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force are to be respected at all times. If a participant may have a question it is to be directed towards any race officials.

5.1 Roles

Noah Pitzer - Event Director
Wade Wilson - Timing and Scoring
Charlotte Wilson - Registration/Scoring
Isaac Pettit - Live Stream
Mark Kottlowski - Track Area Manager
Dustin Tilson - Pilot Manager

It is acknowledged that our event officials are also participating in the race. If there is concern for any potential bias or unfairness in decision making, they may be brought to a separate event official and a group decision will be made.

6. Frequency Management

The safety and competitiveness of a drone race event revolves around having clear, uninterrupted video feeds for all competitors. Often there are outliers that may impact video reception that are out of the organizer's hands, for example, a noisy video transmitter or a pilot with poor or damaged antennas. The following guidelines for ensuring good frequency management and safety are required:

6.1 No Broadcasting During A Race (Powering On)

No broadcasting of video signals within or around the venue is allowed unless consent is given by the race director. If a pilot is found to be broadcasting video during a race, it can be considered grounds for disqualification if the race director deems the infraction to be intentional.

6.1.1 Verbal Warning

Race directors should give a clear verbal warning for the first infraction before resorting to disqualification. However, the Race Director does have the final say.

6.2 Frequency Assignments

All participants will be provided with their frequency assignment prior to the event. This will allow pilots plenty of time to arrive at the event on their assigned channel which will allow Tech Inspection to go smoothly and efficiently.

6.2 Frequency Profiles

Frequency profiles are set groups of frequencies in the 5.8ghz band that are spaced apart in order to minimize RF interference of video signals. We will be utilizing the following channels:

- Raceband 1
- Raceband 2
- Raceband 6

- Raceband 8

Channels are subject to change given the environments surrounding signals.

6.3 Groundstations

The CQR multi-diversity analog groundstation as well as the HDZero Event VRX Pro will be in use at this event. Pilots may connect and use the system of their choosing, or elect to use their own goggle module. Using a personal groundstation external to the goggles is not permitted.

Connections to Goggles:

- CQR Multi Diversity Groundstation: 3.5mm “Headphone Jack” AV-IN Port
- HDZero Event VRX Pro: Mini HDMI Cable

Most modern goggles come equipped with one or both of these connections. The event crew is not responsible for ensuring these systems work with each pilot’s equipment, however they are often able to lend a hand getting a pilot connected.

Please note: it is critical to prevent gear damage that goggles are taken off the head between heats, and not unplugged until after the pilot is done with all qualifying or race heats in a given rotation. Walking away with the groundstation cable still attached is an easy way to damage your equipment and the groundstation.

7. General Drone Racing Rules

Drone Racing Rules are set in place to ensure a fair competition.

7.1 Race Course Obstacles

The course will consist of many gates, flags, and tunnels. Each feature of the race course is strategically placed in order to ensure pilots have a clear understanding of the direction of the race course as well as each individual gate. If a pilot were to miss a gate or obstacle, they must go back and fly through the missed gate. If a pilot were to proceed on the track without going back for a missed gate, that specific lap will be disqualified for incompletion. We always suggest turning back for a gate if you missed it. The same goes for crashing on a gate. If a pilot is unsure if they went through a gate while crashing it's suggested to

turn back and fly through that gate again. If they do not do such, they will be subject to a review to determine if the pilot did get through the gate in the correct direction.

7.1.1 Making A Gate

The front plane of a gate is defined as the interior perimeter of the opening.The entirety of the aircraft must completely make it through the plane of the gate in order to count.

7.1.2 Going Through A Gate Backwards

Going through a gate backwards is not acceptable by any means necessary.
If a pilot were to go backwards through a gate and cause a midair collision, this will be deemed a re-run, however the pilot causing the midair will be disqualified from racing in the re-run race. BRACKETS ONLY! If a pilot goes through a gate backwards we strongly suggest that pilot to circle back and go through the gate the correct direction as intended before proceeding on the course. If a pilot goes through a gate backwards and makes the decision to continue on through the track without circling back, the run will go into DVR review. If the race ops team decides that the pilot that went through the gate backwards has gained a race line advantage, then this will be deemed a DQ to that pilot. We suggest that you always circle back and go through the gate the correct direction to prevent the chances of obtaining a DQ.

7.1.3 Flags

Flags extend infinitely into space but it is advised pilots navigate near the flag so that judges can accurately assess the turn. A pilot must pass on the designated side of the flag.

7.1.4 Hurdles

A Hurdle is intended to create an elevation change where the pilot is required to go directly above the hurdle in the correct direction advised.

7.2 Before A Race Starts

Before A Race Start is defined as the time between each heat where a pilot is preparing to race in their designated heat.

7.2.1 Launch Pads

Cincinnati Quad Racers provides 4x launch pads in which pilots have the choice to use them or not. Additionally, a pilot may not use their own launch pad unless they bring 4x launch pads to ensure all pilots are able to use the same launch pads at any given time.

7.2.2 VTX Pit-Mode

Cincinnati Quad Racers suggests that all pilots utilize a VTX Pit-Mode switch to prevent the potential of overheating their VTX on the launch pads prior to the heat.

7.2.4 Arming Period

While armed, if a pilot were to fall off the launch pads prior to the start tone going off that pilot is required to turn back around and ensure they do not pass the launch line until the start tone has gone off. If a pilot fails to turn around and continues on prior to the start tone, the pilot will be disqualified for that heat.

7.2.5 Aircraft Damage / Unable to Race / Eedok Rule

If a heat has started and a pilot is unable to race whether it be one motor not spinning, not able to arm, or any potential reason as to why they cannot take off. In this event, given any number of pilots in said heat get through the start gate before the pilot still on the launch pads hasn't taken off, this will be deemed a re-run. This will be assessed under the phrase “inability to sustain controlled flight” which means, for example if you have a damaged motor wire, you might attempt to take off and flip off the launch table, and not “sustain controlled flight.” However, if you are able to take off, but then your motor wire immediately breaks after you have been flying for just a second, this would not qualify as an Eedok ruling. The judgement on this is based upon race director discretion. Additionally, there may only be one re-run per heat. No exceptions.

7.2.6 Not Ready In Time

This event moves extremely quickly and we are on a tight time schedule.
In the event you are not prepared to launch in the allotted time, said pilot will not be able to race in that heat.

7.3 Starting A Race

7.3.1 Pilot Takes Off Before The Start Tone

As mentioned above, if a pilot were to take off prior to the start tone, the pilot is to turn around and ensure they do not pass the launch zone until the start tone has gone off.

7.3.2 Aircraft Unable To Take Off (Eeedok Rule)

If a heat has started and a pilot is unable to race whether it be one motor not spinning, not able to arm, or any potential reason as to why they cannot take off. In this event, given any number of pilots in said heat get through the start gate before the pilot still on the launch pads hasn't taken off, this will be deemed a re-run. This will be assessed under the phrase “inability to sustain controlled flight” which means, for example if you have a damaged motor wire, you might attempt to take off and flip off the launch table, and not “sustain controlled flight.” However, if you are able to take off, but then your motor wire immediately breaks after you have been flying for just a second, this would not qualify as an Eedok ruling. The judgement on this is based upon race director discretion.

7.3.3 Midair Holeshot Rule

Only during elimination brackets will this rule be in effect. If two or more aircrafts collide with one another, no matter how drastic the mid air may be, prior to the start gate, this will be deemed a re-run. If it happens after the start gate the race will commence as usual. Race officials have the right to adjust the hole shot gate based on the track design.

7.3.4 Video Loss Due To Plug-In

In the event a pilot claims that someone has “stomped” or plugged in on their Channel, a DVR review will be completed by the officials to determine if it was the pilot’s gear faulting or if someone truly did plug in on their channel. Again, no one should ever be plugging in their aircraft at any given time unless they are racing. If it is deemed that someone plugged in on the pilot this will be a re-run. If it is deemed that it is the pilots faulty gear, the race will commence as intended.

8. Qualifying Day Specific Rules

- Each pilot will get eight (8) qualifying batteries.
- We will run back to back heats meaning, you will fly two(2) batteries back to back to ensure efficiency within our events.
- There is an average of 20 minutes between your heats so be ready.
- During qualifying there will be two(2) minutes on the timer. Once the two(2) minute timer goes off pilots are to continue flying and finish the lap they are currently on.
- Pilots are attempting to set down their best top two(2) consecutive lap times during qualifying. This means two laps together. Example: Laps 1&2 or Lap 2&3, so on and so forth. This excludes using lap 1&3 or 3&5.
- Turtle Mode is allowed.
- Absolutely no foot traffic on the course at any given time. Pilots must wait until all four(4) pilots are completed with racing prior to retrieving their aircraft.
- We always suggest you to bring two(2) Whoops and three(3) batteries to the flight line with you to ensure you're prepared for the worst.
- Max Battery charge limit is 4.35v, no exceptions. A race official may do a battery check at their discretion at any given time. If a pilot is caught overcharging their battery, not only is this unsafe, but you will be flagged. Do not get flagged twice as you may be subjected to disqualification.
- There will be no false starts or re-runs during qualifying day. No exceptions.
- Pilots will be seated on a temporary stage platform that is well known to move about, and standing or walking on the platform can be felt by everyone and is quite distracting. Because of this, all persons (including each pilot) must remain in place on the stage during the heat, and may not get up and move around until all 4 pilots have completed their race. No exceptions. The Flight Line Official will warn pilots not to move or stand. Repeatedly violating this rule may result in disqualification.
- Distracting behavior on the flight line will not be tolerated. This includes but is not limited to:
    - Stomping
    - Kicking
    - Yelling
    - Talking
    - Touching other pilots
    - Making any sounds that could distract other pilots

9. Elimination Day Specific Rules

- Each pilot will receive one(1) practice battery followed immediately by a back to back run for your first official elimination race.
- As mentioned above, if a pilot were to false start they must turn back and not proceed past the start plane until the start tone goes off. If they do not do such, they will automatically receive a fourth place finish for that heat. Do the right thing!
- If there is a mid air collision before the start gate no matter how impactful it may be, this will be considered a re-run.
- In the event a track element is knocked down or altered, pilots are to continue the race and fly the element as if it was still in place. A rerun may be called by a race official depending on the element's importance to race integrity.
- Each class will have an X amount of set laps to race in the elimination brackets. This will be advised to the pilots prior to racing.
- All pilots are to be able to change channels on their equipment if asked to do such. If it is not possible for a pilot to change channels we will work with you best we can but this does not mean it is guaranteed. Therefore, it is best to have your gear in proper working order at all times.
- Each pilot will be asked to provide a "thumbs up" to the flight line official signaling they are ready to begin. Once all four pilots have signaled, the flight line official will tell the timing official to begin the race. If you have any issues or objections after the race countdown has begun, please loudly exclaim them to an official and the race start will be cancelled. If the tone has already sounded and an issue is discovered, the race will not be called back.
- Turtle Mode is allowed.
- During elimination brackets, there will be a crash gate on the course. A pilot must fully enter into the crash gate to be considered finished with their race. If you bounce out of the crash gate this is okay however as you have already fully entered the crash gate. If you bounce out and are unsure if you made it in, it is best to take off again and fly back into the gate.
- There is no Ironman rule at Cincinnati Quad Racers.
- We will run chase the ace when the bracket is down to the last four(4) pilots. Chase the ace means the first pilot to win two(2) total heats is declared the winner.
- Pilots will be seated on a temporary stage platform that is well known to move about, and standing or walking on the platform can be felt by everyone and is

quite distracting. Because of this, all persons (including each pilot) must remain in place on the stage during the heat, and may not get up and move around until all 4 pilots have completed their race. No exceptions. The Flight Line Official will warn pilots not to move or stand. Repeatedly violating this rule may result in disqualification.

- Distracting behavior on the flight line will not be tolerated. This includes but is not limited to:
    - Stomping
    - Kicking
    - Yelling
    - Talking loudly
    - Touching other pilots
    - Making any sounds that could distract other pilots

10. Bracket Format

Pilots will be seeded accordingly based on their placement from qualifying. Pro and Sport finals will be a double elimination bracket format, whereas Hobbyist Finals will be a single elimination letter main format.

10.1 Single Elimination Format

Used in Hobbyist Class finals only. Due to the format, no practice pack will be involved.

Top 2 finishers from each heat (1st and 2nd Place) will move on to the next round.

Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Race 4	Race 5	Race 6	Race 7
13th Seed	11th Seed	9th Seed	7th Seed	5th Seed	3rd Seed	1st Seed
14th Seed	12th Seed	10th Seed	8th Se Seed	6th Seed	4th Seed	2nd Seed
15th Seed	1st of R1	1st of R2	1st of R3	1st of R4	1st of R5	1st of R6
16th Seed	2nd of R1	2nd of R2	2nd of R3	2nd of R4	2nd of R5	2nd of R6

Hobbyist Class Finals: Races 7+ (Chase the Ace Format)

10.2 Double Elimination Format

Used in Pro and Sport Class Finals Only. One(1) Practice pack will take place for races 1-4 (preliminary round) immediately followed by the elimination round involving those pilots.

Top 2 finishers of each heat (1st and 2nd Place) move on without a strike. 3rd and 4th Place will receive a strike and head down to the consolation bracket, and then will be eliminated from the event once they receive 2 strikes (Finish 3rd or 4th twice).

First to X laps, Double Elimination Brackets should be seeded according to this table:

Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Race 4	Race 5	Race 6	Race 7	Race 8	Race 9	Race 10	Race 11	Race 12	Race 13	Race 14
1st Seed	4th Seed	2nd Seed	3rd Seed	3rd of R1	1st of R1	3rd of R3	1st of R3	1st of R5	1st of R7	1st of R6	1st of R9	1st of R12	1st of R11
8th Seed	5th Seed	7th Seed	6th Seed	4th of R1	2nd of R1	4th of R3	2nd of R3	2nd of R5	2nd of R7	2nd of R6	2nd of R9	2nd of R12	2nd of R11

9th Seed	12th Seed	10th Seed	11th Seed	3rd of R2	1st of R2	3rd of R4	1st of R4	3rd of R6	3rd of R8	1st of R8	1st of R10	3rd of R11	1st of R13
16th Seed	13th Seed	15th Seed	14th Seed	4th of R2	2nd of R2	4th of R4	2nd of R4	4th of R6	4th of R8	2nd of R8	2nd of R10	4th of R11	2nd of R13

Winners Bracket Semifinals: Race 11
Consolation Bracket Semifinal: Race 13
Winners Bracket Finals: Races 14+ (Chase the Ace Format)

10.3 Chase The Ace Final Format

The Final four(4) pilots start with a clean slate, with the winner being the first pilot to earn two(2) wins. This could be done anywhere from two(2) to five(5) total heats. If no pilot completes the designated number of laps, then no win or points are awarded.

11. Tie-Breaker

In the event there is a tie between any of the pilots racing in the finals of chase the ace we will have a race off! Race off rules are the same as all other elimination heat rules (same number of laps, etc.) but only pilots who are involved in the tie breaker are allowed to participate.

Questions? Contact Noah Pitzer or any race official.