

Race Officer Update – Winter 2021

As we head into the winter with the start of the Winter Sunday Series on 17th October, there are a few items to draw to your attention.

Fast/Slow Handicap – Change of Definition

Starting with the Winter Series, the cut-off for Fast/Slow Handicap boats, previously 1077, has now been set at 1147. This means that all boats sailing off a QM handicap of 1147 or below will now qualify for the Fast Handicap fleet (and will need to sail the full number of laps shown on the course boards instead of the one lap fewer sailed by the Slow Handicap fleet). You can take a look at the Appendix to the Winter Series NOR to see all the boats this applies to but boats which have moved from Slow to Fast Handicap include ILCA 6*, Byte CII, Aero 5, 2000 and Xenon.

*[Note that ILCA 6s who choose to sail in the Fast Handicap rather than in the main ILCA fleet should be carrying a masthead streamer.]

Practical Points and Reminders

Quite a few of the following points have already been raised via various emails over the past few months, often in response to competitor comments, but we thought it would be helpful to bring them all together in one place:

1. Finishing Times

From the Summer Series onwards, the RO has had the discretion to extend the 15 minute “finishing window”, which may be useful if it appears that a material number of boats will not finish within that period. In addition, the W flag option remains available to finish tail-enders on the course - although consider the impact of handicaps before using this option.

2. Course-Laying

We are asking the mark-laying teams, in communication with the RO team, to make sure that:

- (a) the windward mark is always laid at a sufficient distance from the reservoir walls/bund to minimize, as far as reasonably practicable, the impact of the “dead” patches which can occur at the edges of the lake;
- (b) The leeward mark/start line is as far downwind as possible, (allowing for items such as windsurfers, barges etc.) in order to use the available water to the best advantage.

3. U Flag

As a general rule, the P flag should be the default preparatory signal for the first start of every race. The RO may, however, choose to go straight to the U flag in situations such as early and late season Wednesday evenings, or for starts with 25+ boats (e.g. Wednesday evenings or ILCAs on a Sunday). The AP option (postpone and start again) is always available if use of the penalty flag looks likely to lead to a harsh result - for example, where a wind shift means the line has become very biased.

4. Role of Pin-End RIB

Big turnouts mean long start lines and it can be difficult to read sail numbers at the far end of the line from the Committee Boat so a patrol boat is typically positioned beyond the pin-end mark to help with this. Note that the pin-end boat is there simply to assist in identifying sail numbers; deciding which boats are over / not over remains solely the responsibility of the RO team. In addition, the primary role of the patrol boats is always safety and if the need arises, giving on-water assistance will take priority.

5. Separation of Flags on Committee Boat

It can sometimes be difficult to display all the flags on the Committee Boat without some overlapping others. It has also been noted that, on Wednesday Evenings the H flag and the U flag are quite similar in appearance which might mean the U flag is not very visible if flown close to the H. It is recommended, therefore, that if U is used, it should be kept well clear of the H flag when both flags are being displayed together during the start sequence.

6. Cut-off time for Sunday racing

The Sunday Series SIs now say that no warning signal will be made after 12.10hrs unless the Duty Officer for the day agrees. There are times when staff need to be freed up from Club racing promptly to support afternoon courses etc. so the aim on those days is to finish racing and have racing boats off the water by 13.30 at the latest. Generally, if everything starts on time this is not an issue but if there are delays, e.g. because of lack of wind, wind shifts etc., things can get a bit squeezed. The wording in the SIs therefore lays down a general principle (which means in effect that the last ILCA warning signal needs to be made by 12.05 and the handicap warning signal at 12.10 with the last start at 12.15). There is still, however, some flexibility in that, if needed, the RO can consult with the DO on the day to see whether a later cut-off time is OK.

None of this changes our standard approach of taking a decision at 11.30 whether to race or abandon on days when there is insufficient wind.