

RACE MANAGEMENT

This paper is written to give sailing competitors an understanding of Race Management procedures, guidelines, as Race Officers (RO) make decisions on the race course.

Race Management works to a standard set of guidelines which are set through the National Officiating Programme promoted by Yachting Australia. This programme is used Australia wide and its value is in getting consistency in Race Management where ever an event is being conducted.

The two major factors that the Race Officer must keep in mind when making decisions on the race course are:

- Is it fair for all competitors, and
- Is it safe.

All competitors are to be treated equally and given every opportunity to perform and complete an event at their level. This understandably can create frustration at some levels.

Some of the guidelines that the Race Officer uses are:

- A Race Officer shall use his discretion when the breeze is below 4 knots
- Set the course on the average wind direction, which is monitored over a period of time.
- Set the start line at 90° to the wind direction, which is being monitored over a period of time.
- The RO shall use his discretion while monitoring the wind angles and choose the most prevalent direction to set his course, using flags to delay the start if necessary. If all premature starters cannot be identified a general recall will be signalled.
- Monitor the wind direction during the race and only change the course if there has been a permanent 20 degree change.
- Do not finish a race unless the majority of competitors can complete the course. See paragraph on course shortening.

Time limits for races can vary, while most races have a limit on the whole fleet it could be beneficial that in some races (ie) Short- handed; a 1 hour limit is set from the first boat finishing.

Where the Race Officer considers that competitors have been disadvantaged by his decision, he should seek redress on their behalf.

A decision to abandon a race is one of the hardest decisions the Race Officer has to make, but is made easier when the two major factors of safe and fair are applied.

A race officer may decide to shorten course. This will be done to allow the majority of the fleet to finish the event, because of unfavourable weather conditions, to meet published race times or any other reason which may affect the safety or fairness of the event. Where ever possible an inshore passage race will be set with as many shortening points as possible.

Radio communication has become an asset to Race Officers allowing them to pass on information to the fleet regarding details on changes, such as course changes, he intends making on the race course. It is also used to identify premature starters, notifying the fleet of a general recall, etc. All these changes and notifications are also signalled through the flag system.

The Race Officer must control an event under the rules as set out in the Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions so it is important that all competitors read and understand both documents.

The Race Officer is there to serve the competitors and if the competitor has a query, question or whatever talk to your Race Officer and gain an understanding of the problems he has out on the race course.

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With input from CYCSA Race Officers John Gibson and Ray Evans.