

## A Quick Guide to Race Management of Team Sailing

### **General principles**

Team Sailing is a competition between teams of yachts where the overall results of all team members is more important than their individual results. Whilst traditionally team racing is between two teams of 3 boats, Optimist team racing is often between teams of 4 boats and there is really no limit provided both teams are equal.

In many events the boats are supplied or organised and equalised by the Organising Authority and the boat's tuning may not be changed by the competitors. They may, however, be reefed as required by the Race Committee. Penalties would apply where a boat's tuning has been altered.

Racing is normally in the format of a series of round robins, where each team sails against each other team, sometimes followed by a finals series between the top qualifying teams. A Swiss league format is widely used overseas, but has not been tried in NZ.

Unlike fleet racing, where an event has a nominated number of races each of which takes around an hour to complete with 3 or 4 per day, a team racing regatta is usually planned to last for a certain amount of time and as many series and races are fitted in as can be organised. This will depend largely on the weather, the number of teams entered, the availability of sufficient umpires and equipment breakdowns. This could mean that as few as 8 races or less could be sailed or as many as 15 per hour. Individual races should last between 6 and 9 minutes, but with a 15 minute time limit.

If there are enough boats for all teams to sail at all times there will be no need to change boats. If, however, there are more teams than you have boats for, teams will need to cycle in and out of the boats to a pre-arranged schedule, but this all takes time. A good schedule/draw will have only one team changing at a time. Ideally there will be one race just starting, a second race half completed, a third race just finished with crews changing over and a fourth race making its way from the finish down to the next start. If the boat on which the non-sailing competitors wait their turn (the change-over boat) is situated close to the finish area there is minimum time lost getting the new sailors into their boats and they have a bit of time to familiarise themselves with the boats as they make their way to the start area.

The number of races in a round robin is given by the formula  $Races = N(N-1)/2$  where N is the number of teams. E.g if there are 8 teams the number of races will be  $8 \times (8-1) / 2 = 8 \times 7 / 2 = 28$  If there are a lot of teams it may be necessary to split the entries into 2 separate round robins. A round robin for 16 teams is 120 races. A round robin for 2 lots of 8 teams is 56 races. If there are a large number of teams they may need to be split into two or even three seeded divisions with a repechage between rounds to allow poorly seeded teams to move up or down the order. The format needs to be adjusted when you know how many teams you have and the amount of time you have available. It is also quite acceptable to adjust the format part way through the event.

## **The Rules**

The rules under which Team Sailing is held are basically the same as fleet racing, and that includes the Race Management rules. Appendix D Team Racing should be invoked. However although it is perfectly ok to use them “as written” they do not make for a good team racing event and in NZ they have been significantly “changed” mostly in the Sailing Instructions to provide a quicker and better series of races than would otherwise be the case. Race Officers organising a fun event can simply explain how it’s going to work but for a more serious team racing event they need to carefully work through these changes to avoid confusion or ambiguity.

## **Flexible format**

There is no fixed format for team racing but a pattern, reflected in these notes, has been developed in NZ. The Sailing Instructions should be written in such a way as to allow flexibility to try and give everyone as much sailing as possible, but ensuring you have enough time to achieve a result. They also need to cover how the scoring will be done for the various options of format.

There is a process within Appendix D to use the results from an incomplete round robin, provided at least 80% of the races have been run, but it is a bit of a rough process and should be avoided if possible.

This “flexibility” can seem strange to those used to a preset format of fleet racing and takes a while to get used to. It is important that rounds are added, deleted or altered in such a way so as to avoid the perception that things are being organised to suit one particular team. It is best done by the race committee or someone with no particular affiliation and with an explanation to the teams.

### **1) The Course**

The course is usually a reversed “S” shape, with a short beat to the first mark taking around 60 seconds. Mark 1 is left to starboard which gives plenty of opportunity for team racing tactics. The next leg is a short reach on port to mark 2, also left to starboard followed by a reasonably long run to mark 3 (port). This is followed by a similar reach to mark 4 (port) and a reasonably long beat to the finish. Ideally the whole course takes around 7 minutes to complete.

### **2) The Start**

The start procedure abandons Rule 26, but still has a warning signal and a preparatory signal, with recalls etc. In NZ we have adopted a 3 minute sequence with the preparatory signal at 1 minute. Before the warning signal the teams which are due to start are usually identified with coloured flags indicating the colour of the sails of the relevant teams or some other identification process. There is a convention that the umpires will “follow” one of the teams and this is selected from the display of the flags. For that reason the position of the flags on the committee boat is important. The one minute signal is accompanied by the removal of the flags which are then available to be used to signal any boats recalled. There are a number of possibilities as to how it all can be done but the procedure remains the same.

### 3) **Sound Signals**

There are a number of automatic timers in NZ which makes things a lot easier. They are programmed to give a 3 minute count down with sound signals at 3 mins, 2 mins, 1 min, 30 secs, 20 secs, 10 seconds and then 5,4,3,2,1 start. The beginning of the sound marks the exact time. If the sound signals are to be the official signal, as opposed to the raising and lowering of flags, which is the normal fleet racing process, then the Sailing Instructions should say so.

### 4) **Timing between races**

Once a race has started you are ready to start the next sequence, but first check that the appropriate boats have arrived in the start area and that there are sufficient umpires close to hand. Because it is often not possible to use the start of one race as the warning signal for the next, it is preferable never to do so. Leave a short gap after one start before starting the next sequence. Sailors are expected to quickly make their way to the start area, but if they have been delayed by a slow change over you should give them time to get to the start.

### 5) **Signalling the next race and recalls**

One commonly used option is to raise the warning signal flags well in advance of starting the timer sequence. This alerts the teams that the next race is theirs. When the timer reaches 1 min to go, remove the flags and hold them ready to signal any recalls. If there is a recall raise the flag(s) corresponding to the team(s) which is being recalled together with a sound signal, and lower them once that team's boats have started correctly. It is acceptable to hail the boats which need to return, e.g. "Blue 2, Yellow 3". It is almost unheard of to have a general recall and instead a call of "All boats over" is used. Beware if you have 6 boats returning from a short distance it is quite hard to keep track of them all to see if they have recrossed.

### 6) **Postponement**

If for any reason a race for which a sequence has started needs to be postponed we do not usually bother with the AP flag, but instead give 5 short blasts on the sound signal. To restart the sequence give another 5 short blasts followed a few seconds later by restarting the timer. This is a very informal process but seems to work well and saves a lot of time compared to the normal AP process.

### 7) **Abandoning the race**

Similarly, if a race needs to be abandoned we would give 5 short blasts if they are within the first beat and radio the umpires to abandon the race. We do not use "N" flag. The race would normally be abandoned in the first beat if a windshift had made it into a lay through. After the first mark the job of abandoning a race becomes the responsibility of the umpires who may have noticed that the race was unfair. They would tell the competitors and advise the Race Officer what they had done.

### 8) **Races are not shortened**

Races are not shortened with flag S. If the time limit runs out the race gets resailed. This usually happens when the wind is very light and there is time to get that race back to the start area and re-run it when the wind picks up. The umpires can be used to convey the message to the sailors. It is important to keep a note of the start time if there is any chance that the time limit might be exceeded. For that reason a watch other than the automatic timer is vital.

### 9) **Changing the Course**

The course can be adjusted without the use of Flag C. It is acceptable to move the marks provided no boats are heading towards them. Similarly the start line can be adjusted, technically up to the one minute but ideally not after the start of a sequence.

### 10) **Other signals**

Signals like AP/H and AP/A are rarely necessary but have the same meaning if used.

### 11) **Breakdowns**

Breakdowns are quite common. Unlike fleet racing when you would ignore them, it is important to know when they happened. Normally the Sailing Instructions will spell it out, but usually if a breakdown happens after the preparatory signal, the race is not stopped and the umpires will decide whether the affected team had a chance of winning and thus require the race to be resailed. If the breakdown is before the preparatory signal, or if it is obvious that the race will need to be resailed, then the race should be postponed (5 blasts) and time given to make the repair. This can require anything from a few seconds to the replacement of the complete boat. Generally it is worth waiting a few minutes and keeping the same starting order, but if the repair is going to take a long time you may decide to leave that race and carry on with the programme. The missed race can be sailed at a later time, but it usually throws everything into chaos. Make sure you tell the finish boat and the change-over boat what is happening or they could get into a real muddle. More time is wasted dealing with breakdowns than any other cause in team racing.

### 12) **Finishing**

If you are using the "S" course the finishing will be done by a separate boat but still under the authority of the Race Officer. The finishing team need to be aware of a few important things. It is normal to give a small sound signal for each boat as it finishes because a boat which has finished is not allowed to return to the course to help a team mate. Boats may receive a penalty very close to the finish and need to do their penalty and cross the line, before being recorded as finished. The finishing order is important because although it is clear which team won the race in a count back situation the points each team member achieved will count. Use codes to represent each combination of finishing places to make it easier to record this information eg 1,2 3 might be code 1 and 1,2 4 code 2 etc, etc

### 13) **Scoring**

Scoring of a race and a round are covered in Appendix D, but consideration needs to be given to the accumulated scores of several rounds. Will they simply be added together? Will earlier rounds score lower than later ones? What happens to the scores of teams which move up or down in repechages? There is no finite answer to these questions, but the answers need to be determined and noted in the Sailing Instructions. The system currently used in the secondary schools nationals is that after each round there is a repechage. Teams are then listed from highest to lowest and "regatta points" awarded with the highest placed team taking 1 point and so on. Once the event is terminated the team with the least accumulated regatta points is the winner. This means that every win counts, but no team can accumulate significantly more points than its near rivals, so the competition remains tight.

#### 14) Finals series

Again a finals series is an optional format. It would normally consist of a “best of 3 or 5” series between the top 2, 4 or 6 teams. However, it is considered more important to complete a round robin already started, than to hold a finals series, as this is likely to keep more sailors competing for longer. If a round robin is completed shortly before the end of the event a finals series might be fitted into a short time slot. As with other phases of the format, it pays to have generic schedules prepared, ready to hand out, so that time is not lost doing this at the end of the competition.

#### Summary

- Have a draft format, but adjust it depending on how the event is progressing.
- Organise change-overs to be as smooth as possible to save time.
- Draw up a schedule to require only one team to change after each race if possible.
- Alter the schedule as necessary to give everyone plenty of sailing but keep an eye on ensuring you get a result.
- Keep the teams informed why you have changed the schedule and what you hope to achieve.
- Round robin races =  $N(N-1)/2$
- Score unfinished rounds using Appendix D4.2b
- Make the call if boats are to be reefed.
- Lay an S shaped course to take 6-9 minutes.
- Start sequence is 3 minutes.
- Display warning signal identifying the next teams before starting the timer.
- Lower the warning signal at the one minute.
- Use the coloured flags for individual recalls.
- Hail the numbers of the boats OCS.
- Signal Postponement or Abandonment with 5 blasts
- Signal your intention to restart the sequence soon with 5 blasts.
- Abandon the race if the first leg is a lay through.
- Move marks any time as long as no boat is approaching them.
- Allow time for breakdowns.
- Only skip a race held up for breakdown as a last resort.
- If you do skip a race make sure the finish and changeover boats are aware.
- Upskill your finishing team.
- Choose a scoring system that suits your competition.
- If considering a “finals series” have generic schedules already prepared.
- Ensure really good communications with mark-layer Chump, finish boat, boat repairer and change-over person.