

Guidelines for Race Officers

Programme of Races

Saturdays: The aim is to have 3 races of 40 to 50 minutes duration. Under average conditions this is likely to mean races of 2 laps round buoys 1 - 6 or 3 - 8.

The first two races should be back - to - back with a minimum time between races. This may be best achieved by using the same start and finish line, positioned just to windward of a leeward mark. A tea break will normally be taken between races 2 and 3, allowing crews to go ashore, but again the time between races should be minimised to that necessary for a quick cuppa so that most time can be spent racing – the OOD has the responsibility to keep the fleet moving.

Tuesdays: The aim is to have 2 races back to back starting at 18.45hrs and finishing in time to pack up boats before it becomes too dark. The two races should be back - to - back with a minimum time between races. This may be best achieved by using the same start and finish line, positioned just to windward of a leeward mark.

Committee Boat

Arrive in time to check out the committee boat facilities and ensure that you understand the workings of them. Ensure that you have everything you will need on board.

Most of the equipment required for running races is kept onboard the boat. The standard flags are ready rigged on the mast, while other flags, the course numbers, and wind indicator are kept in the locker at the front of the boat. Race sheets (preferably NOT the sign on sheet) + radios + pencils/pens should be brought from the clubhouse. Note that you must bring your own stopwatch/timing device.

Setting a Course

Try to allow plenty of time before the start to set a course – ideally be out on the water half an hour before the start, having spoken to your Safety boat driver.

Your first objective in setting the course should be to include at least one true beat to windward – preferably as the first leg. This can be difficult with certain wind directions, so check the wind direction and strength at several positions on the lake particularly your intended start area and windward mark.

You may need to move a mark or two to set a true beat or get them out of becalmed areas, but be aware of the time this will require. Whatever the first leg, it should be of sufficient length to provide some separation of the fleet before they arrive at the first mark. (If you move marks, please reposition them at the end of racing).

Try to avoid lots of marks on the downwind leg as this tends to turn the race into a procession as gaps between boats open up as each waits its turn to round each mark. A run down the lake often allows a more tactical leg with several potentially race winning tracks.

Display the course on the port side of the committee boat using the green and red numbers, starting towards the front of the boat and working backwards. GREEN numbers indicate STARBOARD mark roundings and RED numbers indicate PORT mark roundings – double check you got it right before you put up the course.

Indicate the number of laps using the white numbers, at the very back of the boat. Be realistic about the number of laps you indicate, given the wind conditions, number of races and amount of daylight available. It is sensible practice to post one more laps than you think likely as you cannot lengthen the course if the wind gets up. The course can always be shortened to give the right length of race.

Setting a Start Line

The committee boat should be positioned at the Starboard end of the line, with the port end defined by the white buoy (Outer Distance Mark – ODM). According to the RYA/ISAF the start line should be between 1.1 to 1.5 times the total length of all the boats racing from that start. Thus, for a fleet of 25 GPs, the start line should be between 128 & 175 yards (117 – 160 m) long.

Place the white buoy (the outer distance mark ODM) where you want it to be first, and then drive the committee boat to its position and drop anchor. Remember that the boat will drift down wind of the anchor. The anchor line is long enough to allow fine tuning of the boat's position and this can be done up until the preparatory signal.

Assuming a beating start, the line should lie roughly perpendicular to the wind. Ideally it should be set with a slight Port bias, such that a boat starting on Port at the Port end would just cross ahead of one starting on Starboard at the Starboard end. This means the buoy at the port end of the line should be a couple of boat lengths to windward of the committee boat.

Basic Start Sequence

Two people and a bit of coordination are required to run the start sequence. The first required signal is the warning signal, though it is common local practice to sound the horn a number of times 10 seconds prior to this to get the attention of the fleet. Ensure that a good blast on the horn is given to allow sailors with fluttering/rattling sails a chance to hear it. Remember that under the racing rules it is the timing of the flag which counts and the sound signal is only to draw attention to this – try to keep them coordinated.

Start -5 minutes	Raise the GP14 Class Flag (A-Flag, white with blue at end), start the countdown timer and make a single sound signal.
Start -4 minute	Raise the Preparatory Flag (P-flag, blue with white square in centre) and make a single sound signal.
Start -1 minute	Lower the Preparatory Flag and make a single sound signal (should be longer than others).
Start (0 minutes)	Lower the GP14 Class Flag and make a single sound signal

At the start, one of you should sight along the line from the front edge of the committee boat mast to the ODM to check for premature starters (equipped with pencil and paper to record their numbers, or even a Dictaphone). Provided that you can't see any boats on the course side of the line at the start that's it!

Remember that if 3 or more Lasers are racing, you will need a Laser start first, otherwise the Lasers start with the GP14 boats. GP14s go after the Laser start.

Start line Infringements/Re-starts/Penalty Flags

If a small number of boats are over the line (On Course Side – OCS) at the start AND you can identify them all, immediately make ONE further sound signal and display the X-flag (white with a blue cross +) to indicate Individual Recalls. The flag should be displayed until all the identified boats have completely crossed to the pre-start side of the line or for 4 minutes, whichever is sooner. Boats which have been OCS and have failed to restart should not be given a finish signal and should be recorded on the results sheet as OCS.

If you are unable to identify the boats which are OCS, immediately make TWO sound signal and display the First Substitute flag (yellow pennant with a blue border) to indicate a **General Recall**.

General Recall

If you signal a general recall, instruct the Safety Boat to have the fleet return to the start area and decide whether/which pen flag to use for the re-start. Continue to display the General Recall flag until you are ready to start the new sequence; make a sound signal as you drop the flag and start the new sequence (5 minute warning signal) one minute later.

Two penalty flags are available on the boat and replace the P-flag in the standard start sequence. The I Flag (yellow with a black circle) requires that boats who cross the start line in the final minute before the start return to the pre-start side by passing around either end of the line, "Round the Ends Rule". The Black Flag requires that boats do not enter the triangle formed by the start line and first mark during the final minute before the start. Boats infringing whichever of these rules is enforced are disqualified from this and any subsequent start and should retire from the race area. Use of the Black Flag is generally recommended for club racing as it seems to impose good starting discipline on the fleet.

Finishing the Race

The location of the finish should be considered when setting the course; ideally it will be on a beat, though this is not essential. Setting the start line a short way up the beat is recommended for back-to-back races as it will allow the use of the start line for the finish and hence a minimum time delay between races. If a different finish line is set it should require boats to follow the general direction of the course. Either an (orange) mark of the course or the white distance mark may be used for the finish line, with the boats to leave it to Port. The finish line may be of any length, though a relatively short line (10 -20 boat lengths) will make it easier to read and record sail numbers.

If the full course is sailed the committee boat should display a blue flag as the lead boat approaches the final mark. If the course is shortened, the S-Flag (white with a blue square) should be displayed as the lead boat approaches/rounds the final mark and two sound signals made.

As the bow of each boat breaks the line a sound signal should be made and its sail number recorded. One person can sight along the line, make the sound signals and read the numbers aloud for the other to record.

The time of the lead boat should also be noted as any boats not finishing within 20 minutes are timed out and recorded as Did Not Finish (DNF). It is good practice to record sail numbers prior to the start and on each lap so that you can account for all the boats. It is not required to record race times of all boats.

Other Points to Note

Time keeping is important for all these races as the amount of time available is limited; try to ensure that the first race is started on time – you are not required to wait for stragglers. The second race should be started as soon after the completion of the first as is practicable; choosing a finish for the 1st race which can be used to start the second saves time manoeuvring and anchoring the committee boat.

When setting the course, try to provide a variety of points of sailing. As well as a decent beat, try to include at least one spinnaker leg and some legs of sufficient length to provide tactical choices for the fleet.

Remember to pick up the white buoy at the end of racing and leave it in the committee boat.

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