

# Dinghy Race Officer's Duties and Responsibilities 2009

The racing rules of sailing state: *'The responsibility for a boat's decision to participate in a race or to continue racing is hers alone' (Rule 4).*

However, the Race Officer (RO) has a responsibility to ensure as far as is possible that the race will be run with the minimum of risk to the participants.

Before a race can commence, the Patrol Boat (Driver and Crew) must be on the water with the race marks laid and be in the vicinity of the starting area. If necessary signal a postponement.

## **The race is not to be sailed without Patrol Boat and radio cover.**

1. All competitors must sign on before a race. If the Race Officer or Patrol Boat crew are competitors in a race series and wish to claim compensation, they should sign on also with their dinghy details and write "DUTY in the Finish Time/DNF/DUTY column.
2. Obtain an up to date weather forecast from the various sources available - look at local conditions. If you think conditions may be unsuitable for a race consult with the patrol boat crew and available members of the Sailing Committee. Take into account the known ability of the participants and the patrol boat crew.
3. Set a course that is suitable for the anticipated conditions. If a deterioration in the weather is expected set a short course with a number of laps. This gives you the ability to shorten the course if necessary. Remember the Tudor 'D' flag rule allowing the race to be shortened for the slow handicap boats. Consult with available members of the Sailing Committee for advice. Try to avoid being overly cautious.
4. **Life-Saving Equipment and Personal Buoyancy**  
It shall be the individual responsibility of each competitor to wear adequate personal buoyancy when conditions warrant. All boats must carry buoyancy aids, and all under 18s must always wear them. Wet or dry suits and buoyancy aids must be worn by all competitors during all races held between 1st November and 31st March inclusive. If you think that conditions warrant it then raise **flag 'Y'** which indicates that adequate personal buoyancy shall be worn while racing by all competitors.
5. Ensure radio contact (Channel 37, also shown as M1, P1 or n1 on different radios) with the patrol boat and advise them of the number of entrants.
6. Having set a course, if there is a significant wind change before the start requiring a change to the course then raise **flag 'L'** to advise the competitors that a new course has been set. If necessary signal a postponement to give the competitors time to obtain the new course. Do not be afraid to do this if it is required; better a bit of a delay to sort things out than to continue with an unsatisfactory course.
7. Advise the patrol boat crew that they are to make the RO aware of conditions and actions they are undertaking.
8. Ensure the patrol boat crew have details of the course and advise of possible problem areas.
9. Once the race has started you must ensure that a radio watch is maintained constantly until all craft are ashore.

10. Record the progress of all boats throughout the race. This includes any boats that fail to start properly (if over the line record "OCS"), lap times, whether and when any boats withdraw from the race (record as "DNF") and finishing times. Note that even if a boat was OCS at the start, if they continue to race then record lap times and finish time in case of any dispute. If in doubt about a boat's status, always record lap times/finish time.
11. Ensure, with the aid of the patrol boat, that all entrants have been accounted for at the end of the race.
- 12 . Copy all relevant details (eg PY, number of laps sailed, finish times, corrected times) from the Sailing Log onto the Signing-on sheet for the Results Checker. Make sure that the actual race Start Time is recorded, if it was postponed.

## NOTES

**Postponement:** This may be signalled for a number of reasons. If there is too much or too little wind and it is likely that conditions may improve within a reasonable time, if a large vessel is manoeuvring within the starting area or the patrol boat is not ready (eg still out laying marks), then a postponement should be made until circumstances have improved. If an error is made in the starting sequence (e.g. a late preparatory or 1 minute signal) then a postponement must be signalled. A new starting sequence is to be run. In such circumstances do not let the start proceed, as confusion leading to bad feeling (and quite possibly claims for redress) may well result.

**Abandonment:** The most likely causes for abandonment are failing wind, making it impossible to complete the race within the time limit, or deteriorating weather conditions making it unwise to continue racing bearing in mind the competence of all on the water. Other examples are a missing mark or a serious error by the RO that will make it impossible for the race to produce a fair result. Depending on the reason it may be possible to restart the race when the problem has been resolved.

### **Over the Line at the Start: ("OCS").**

In the case of boats over the line at the start, apart from making the recall signal (Flag "X"), the RO is not required to inform boats individually that they were over. If an attempt is made to inform any boat that they are over then the RO must ensure that all boats over are informed, otherwise a boat not so informed could claim to have been treated unfairly (but only if it was in any doubt as to whether OCS or not).

### **Rule Infringements seen by the Race Committee**

If you (or the patrol boat crew) are aware of any rule infringements you may (indeed often should) write up a protest form. The competitor should be informed as soon as they come ashore, within the normal protest time limit.

Note this action also applies if you (or patrol boat) see a boat (for example) missing a mark, rounding a mark the wrong way or in some other way sailing the wrong course. You cannot simply mark the boat down as "Disqualified"; a hearing is required.

Try to obtain a witness if at all possible, such as the patrol boat, or note down the identity of other boats in the vicinity who could be asked about this incident after the race.

A protest hearing should then be convened in the usual way, unless the boat concerned admits to the offence and Retires from the race (Race score "RAF", retired after finishing).