



Sailing Events: Practical Management Tips

Over the last few years the TopYacht team has become more and more involved with major sailing events. While primarily involved with the production of results we have necessarily become involved with other aspects of events. The following is an apparently obvious list of items that we have seen carried out well at some events and ignored at other events. These ideas are not in a particular order.

PS the team members have all recently either been competitors in major events and/or have been involved in race management of same , as well as results production.

Roles and Responsibilities

There is no room for "she'll be right mate" in a properly run event.

The organisation, responsibilities and physical equipment must be ready well **before** the event. It is far too common to see folks assembling flags, creating lunch order forms, explaining "how to lay a mark" or working out "who is on the finish boat" as the events is actually starting!

Have a simple printed list of jobs / roles.

Make sure the list it is comprehensive. If the task exists, someone is going to have to do it, or the organisers are likely to look a bit silly. There are race management tasks (PRO, RO, start team, finish team, course layer etc) and event management personnel (registrars, caterers, car park coordinators, cleaners etc).

Have a simple written description of each role.

Most people are pleased to have a clearly defined task / list of expectations.. There is much less chance of the task not being fulfilled to the satisfaction of the participant and the organisers. "He'll know what we need." Is **not** the way to go. Put a simple job description in their hand. Make sure they understand exactly what is expected of them; **everyone** will be happier.

Have specified organisers/coordinators.

These are the **essential** people who hold it all together. The folks carrying out the various roles of "starter", "time keeper", "car park attendant" etc are busy doing their thing, they are very unlikely to have time to co-ordinate as well!!

You will need both "on water" and "off water" organisers.

For larger events you need an off water "race management" person, usually the PRO, to make on the spot decisions about administrative issues such as implementation of breaches of safety code, even chasing up wrong sail numbers etc.

You need a separate Event Coordinator who is organising everything from making sure the venue is cleaned each night to making sure you haven't run out of ink/paper for the printer

Often one single person to wear too many hats.

All too often the club just expects one person to "do it all" or the individual just takes it upon themselves. Either way it is very unfair to that person and can put an enormous strain on the one individual. That is bad for the person, the organisation, the competitors and the even the as a whole!!

Share the hats around a number of people.

Import some people if needed.

Establish and write down and distribute procedures.

How will you get the finish times to the computer as soon as the last competitor has finished (or before for drawn out finishes)?

What will you do if a nasty, unexpected change comes through?

How will you assemble the protest committee (when needed) if several members are not on site?

How can a competitor get info about why their result for race 2 appears to be incorrect?

Talk to people!!!!

Keep the volunteers informed as to what is happening. "The postponements will be reviewed at 15:00"

Keep the competitors informed. Often this is done rather poorly. It *their* regatta!! Tell them when the postponements will be reviewed, let them know where to leave their boats at lunch time etc.

Data Management.

Before event: You need a sensible database structure to collect data about the competitor before the event. You need that (confirmed) information *before* the first race.

During event: You need printed forms on coloured coded paper to gather data during the event. Forms for: Sign on, competitors list, finish sheet, retirement sheet, mark rounding sheet, protest forms etc.

After Event: Do a debrief. Write down things that went well and things that need improving for next time. Prepare a "how to" for the next team that take on these tasks.

Finish Boat Team

Provided that the proper preparation has been put in place before the Regatta, the **key personnel** in the results generation process are **those on the finish boat**.

The odd computer adage still applies "garbage in garbage out".

It is the responsibility of the finish boat team to provide the computer operator with **all** the necessary information needed to generate sensible results.

To that end, it is important to ensure that the information can be conveyed ashore as early as possible.

- Ensure there is an email-capable mobile phone aboard
- Load the email address of someone ashore that can receive emails. This means that a laptop and printer need to be ashore.
- Consider the possibilities of capturing finish times electronically. See [Entering Finish Times](#)

If the [TopYacht Finish Form](#) has **every** section filled in, then **all** the necessary information present. **This one form captures the complete race data**. If the data is spread across numerous sheets/forms then problems will almost certainly occur.

To enable the generation of a complete results report....

General Information Required.

- Event Name and the course this finish boat is servicing
- Race Date
- First Start time
- Last boat's finish time (For protest time limit)
- Scribe (i.e. who filled in the form)
- Wind speed and direction
- Average wave height

For each Division That Finished At This Finish Boat....

- Course they sailed
- Beat length
- Start Time

For each boat that crosses the finish line [even if they are known to be disqualified, out of time, crossed the line previously, etc].

- Finish time in Time of Day as hours minutes and seconds.
- If they are flying a protest flag.
- Indicate if the start boat has recorded any boat as OCS or BFD or ZFP.

- As soon as the last competitor has finished the finish team should compare the duplicate finish sheets and prepare one that is to be the "agreed" version.
- The sail numbers should then be checked against the competitors list and any corrections made.
- Any competitors that have not finished should be compared with the list of know starters.
- Once these checks are completed the race finish sheets should then be photographed and email ashore.
- It is also very important that the information is emailed ashore as each sequential sheet is completed. Then, send the last sheet ashore as soon as the last boat has finished.
- If there are different courses or divisions finishing at the same boat, record them on a single continuous list rather than a list per group.
- At the end of the racing session, return all finish forms and audio tapes to the Regatta Office. They in turn will pass them to the computer operator so the on water finish sheets /audio tapes can be used to check the times in the computer.

Start Boat Team

- Before each session please collect the Entrants list (for your course) , Start Log form, OCS forms, Wind Log forms, etc from the Regatta Office.
- Please help the results process by telephone the following information to the *finish boat team* as soon as possible after the start(s) is away.

For *each* Division that started for this session....

- Course they sailed (E.G.s. Outer trapezoid 2 laps, Course No 3, Short Triangle Course etc)
- Beat length in nautical miles.
- Start Time in **Time of Day**.
- List of any competitors that were given an OCS, BFD or ZFP.
- If possible, the number of boats that started at each start and if possible a list of non starter's Sail Numbers.
- At the end of the session please return the Start Log, OCS Sheet, etc to the Regatta office.

Mark Rounding Boats Teams

- Before each session please collect the relevant Entrants list , Mark Rounding forms, Wind Log forms etc from the Regatta Office.
- At the end of the session please hand your Mark Rounding forms to the Regatta Office.

Computer Operators

- Review the list of competitors to determine whether the stripping of Alpha Characters¹ from sail numbers is viable
- Prepare a current list of competitors with Sail Numbers, to be made available to each committee / rescue / lap count / etc boat on each course. This list must be available before the committee boats have left the shore and should be passed to the boats via the Regatta Office staff.
- Set up TopYacht ready to input finish times for each race(s) that is currently being run on the water. Do *not* set up future races, just the current race for each course.
- Print the finish time sheet/s from the email/s.
- The standard method is sail numbers read as a series of letters / number in groups of 3 or 4 letters/numbers. So sail no AUS1367 is read out as "A, U, S," very short pause, "one, three, six, seven". While Laser 156342 is read out as "one, five, six," very short pause, "three, four, two".
- The grouping into 3 or 4 letters/numbers is a nice size to remember.]
- The times are read out as follows.
 - For 14: 45: 23 read as "Fourteen, Forty Five, Twenty Three".
 - For 16: 41: 03 read as "Sixteen, forty one, oh three".By using the above system there is a clear distinction between times and sail numbers and this makes it much easier for the computer operator.
- This is best done with two persons. One reading (using the system outlined above for the finish boat team) while the second person types does the data entry. The reader should put a small diagonal line in the "E/C" column on the finish sheets as each competitor is input into the computer.
- For sail numbers that are not recognised by the computer leave them (do not mark the "E/C" column) until all others have been entered. It is usually not hard to marry the incorrect sail number(s) with Entrants who still do not have a finish time for this race.

¹ See TopYacht HELP topic 'Sail Number Alpha Character Stripping'

- When all finish times are entered the computer operator opens the 'View Finish Times' screen and reads the finish times back to the person with the finish times form. As the times are confirmed for each competitor another small diagonal line is made in the "E/C" column. This second line forms a cross i.e. a "X" with the original line in this box and confirms each competitor is Entered and Checked.
- Process the results for each series for that race.
- Publish the results to the Internet.
- Print out the finish time sheet. This is very useful pinned on the notice board. It allows competitors (particularly in a mixed class event) to check their relative finish place.
- Print the results out. Hand both forms to the Regatta Office for the media and the Notice board.
- Unless something has gone very wrong, it should be your aim (and is quite possible) to have the results on the notice board before the competitors reach shore.
- After results have been published there may be requests for information about results or requests for changes to the results. These must not be accepted in verbal format and must not be accepted directly from competitors. All such requests must only be accepted on the [appropriate form](#) via the Regatta Office.
- If there is an error and it is just a typographic error then fix the problem, note this on the Request for Information form and return it to the Regatta Office.
- If the error is other than a typo then any changes *must* be authorised by the Principal Race Officer.
- Once results have been published and any change has been made then it is *most important* that the details of that *change are logged* on the [appropriate log](#) form. This provides an ongoing record of any and all changes to results, when they occurred and why they occurred.
- Changes that result from a protest should come in on a 'Request for Change of Results' form which is signed/authorised by the jury chairperson, actioned then stored with the other race data.
- As soon as a race is processed then *all* documentation relating to that race must be placed in the appropriate folder under the race date / number. This stops confusion between paper work and provides a quick reference for data if it is needed later.

Regatta Office Staff

- Prior to the first race you should be confirming details with competitors and updating a *single* database that will later be imported into TopYacht ready to create results for the competitors. See [TES ~ Entry Conformation at Registration](#)
- Prior to the first race prepare all the various Race / results management forms on the various coloured papers.
- Prior to each race the start / finish / mark rounding / etc will need to be given (by you)
- A current list of competitors on the relevant course.
- Start Log sheets or Finish Forms or Mark Rounding Forms as befits the roll of the boat.
- A list of all Race management craft, the Regatta Office and the results office telephone numbers and/ or call signs a radio frequency.
- After the race you will be provided with results for the Media and to go on the notice board.
- If competitors have questions / complaints about results they must see you and obtain a '[Request for Information](#)' or a 'Request for Change of Results' form.
- The competitor fills in the form, you number the form then log it on the appropriate Log Sheet. You then hand the sheet to the Results Office. Do *not* allow the competitors to go to the Results Office.
- Once the Results Office has processed the form they will return it to you so that you can return it to the competitor who raised the request / complaint.
- All mark rounding sheets, start logs etc must be collected and then passed on to the results office for filing with the rest of the race results raw data.

Further Reading:

[Job Descriptions For The Results Team](#)

[Getting Fast Accurate Results at a Regatta](#)

[On Water Team Checklist](#)