

**INTERNATIONAL ONE METRE
INTERNATIONAL CLASS ASSOCIATION**

Feedback from competitors

**IOM European Championships 2004
Arcos de la Frontera, ESP
October 2004**

Version 1.1
anonymised
October 24, 2004

1. Background

- 1.1. The IOMICA Chairman was a guest at the first three days of the event, by courtesy of the Organising Committee under the chairmanship of Eduardo "Tito" Llana, IOMICA Vice-Chairman (Events).
- 1.2. The IOMICA Chairman's initial comments on the event were summarised as:

Hospitality was stunning. Venue was outstanding. Facilities and resources were very good. Race management didn't fully understand R/C sailing. Still some problems with the umpiring system.
- 1.3. After the event was over, it became clear that a number of competitors felt very strongly that there were certain recurring problems. The IOMICA Chairman invited personal comment from a number of competitors:

If you have a little time, and a little enthusiasm, I would appreciate your opinions on the event. Not some kind of "full report", but some (necessarily personal!) reflections on what you saw and heard, particularly about the umpiring, the heat and race management, and competitor behaviour on the water (ie sportsmanship and rule adherence). I wasn't happy with what I saw in any of these areas, but want to have a long hard think about it, and want to canvas as much opinion as possible, before putting some proposals to the IOMICA Executive.
- 1.4. This document, an edited version with names removed, is provided in public to various IOM and IOMICA stakeholders with a view to continuing the development and improvement of IOM sailing both internationally and nationally. In particular, it is hoped that the comments and views in this document will lead to wide-ranging discussion and debate on the various issues which face IOM (and radio) sailing.

2. Replies

2.1. As at 24 October 2004.

2.2. Entrant A

Let me start with the positive things.

All the people in the staff were very friendly and most willing to help, even though that not all was very good to English. To me it seems that they had tried very hard to make the event the best, here by I mean that the facilities was pretty good, plenty of people in the staff and willing to listen to the sailors. I also liked the idea with the “snack-bar”, even though they did not speak English or had the menu in English, and that the prices were a bit high.

The down side.

Where to start, well the wind they could not do any thing about, but when the wind was there they were far to slow lay a course.

One thing we the sailors tried to point out, was the bias of the start line, 9 out of 10 times the start line was biased to the port end, and with a bias of 20 - 30 degrees. If you were not down in the port end (and one of the outer 4) you could forget being in contention for promotion, often we tacked just after the start on to port and had no problem sailing over the rest.

Next thing that comes to my mind is the lack of information, for hours we could go with out any information, and that lead to some frustrations.

Most of the time the umpiring was ok, especially when we got the umpires to follow boats instead of covering areas of the course.

Sportsmanship: I think that most of the sailors sailed pretty fair, but of course there also were a few who did not and often got away with it. I had a couple of starts ruined by the same sailor, and he did also to many others and got away with nearly every time.

The last thing I will mention here is the entry fee, there was some talking amongst the sailors of what we were getting for our entry fee. For many of us it looked like most of it went to the facilities, what we got was a cap, a t-shirt, a bag, free water and 2 dinners with not enough to eat. I may be spoiled but when I have been to big events when sailing big boat, we have gotten a lot more back.

2.3. Entrant B

Protests

I was involved in three hearings. One as protestor and 2 as protestee. None of the incidents had been observed by umpires.

Umpires

I do not recall being given any penalty by an umpire and do not recall any protest of mine resulting in any penalty being given by an umpire.

Race system

The present race system produces an event that fairly quickly eliminates most people from contention. I spoke to several people about the idea of random race systems. I gather it is used in Germany.

What I see as problems with the present system

A day of light airs in a two fleet race could leave A fleet filled with light airs boats. The next day, with strong winds blowing, it would take about 4 races to get all the other boats into A fleet. This is not reasonable. Putting this another way, after a day of building wind the A fleet will be full of heavy weather boats. The next morning when the wind is light 3/4 of the fleet is 'protected' from poor results. Staying in A fleet required finishing in the top 3/4. Getting into A fleet requires getting into the top 1/4 without fail. A small difference in one's result in the seeding race can have a huge effect on one's final result. I was laying 4th at the last mark in the seeding race and managed to overtake a safe 3rd placed boat. Had that not happened I would have next sailed in B fleet and the outcome would likely have been very different. Bearing in mind that the strength of the 'randomly' chosen fleets for seeding can vary enormously, this has an unreasonable effect on the outcome. Having 1/2 of each fleet promoted or relegated would seem a better choice making movement between fleets far more fluid. The speed of upward and downward movement is enhanced and pressure exists more equally on all competitors.

The existing system produces a race that fairly quickly eliminates most people from contention. This would seem to be undesirable for any competition unless it is to be of short duration. It is quite likely directly responsible for some of the bad behaviour and general disgruntlement among competitors who are used to getting good results and where they are, fairly early on, denied the opportunity to reach what they feel is their 'normal' result.

Social side

Excellent. The presence of the bar/restaurant was great and the fact that it was too far from the water to see anything going on was an asset. Many of the most interesting conversations I had were when we were unable to sail. The buying/selling/trading/talking activity in the tents on the last day while waiting for the last race was the most intense I can recall.

Facilities/boat store

Excellent. Inspired.

Accommodation

Plenty of choice and good quality.

Racing

Liked the water size, the 'European' approach to not racing when the wind was fickle, the start/finish times, abandoning races when the first leg was badly biased, possible abandonment after a massive pile up at first mark.

Did not like the badly biased starts, twin sites rather than use of central position overlooking both racing areas.

Lay day

My view was that a lay day is not there for planned race time. As such it would be wrong to use it for racing. I looked at the SIs and it showed it as a 'reserve day'. This begs the question "Reserved for what?" There seems to be some vague idea that the lay day can be used for racing in some circumstances but I think those circumstances should be set out (in the NoR for forward planning and the SIs) so that the system is transparent.

Sail numbers

The issue of confusing sail numbers surfaced again. The race committee/jury idea of having preceding (but not following) zeroes identified by a slash helped everyone to distinguish 02 and 05 from 20 and 50. However the special problem with the numbers 18, 81, 10, 01, 08, 80 remains. Even if the preceding zero is always identified with the slash it will always be possible for 10 and 80 to be read and quoted as 01 and 08. It occurred to me that the situation could be eased by not allocating any of these as personal numbers. The option of not issuing those numbers is not currently available for boat registration numbers as the numbers shall be issued consecutively. However there might be merit in amending the class rules accordingly to remove 18, 81, 10, 01, 08, 80 and numbers ending in those from the available numbers.

Withdrawal from the event

My concern is about the effect of competitors who take places allocated but who do not attend or complete the event for no very good reason. There are two simple ways to discourage people from non-attendance/ withdrawing from an event for no good reason:

- A. Requirement to lodge a 'performance bond' equal to the entry fee, or some substantial % of it, at the time of entry. Refundable on completion of the event.
- B. Lowering of national ranking position by a certain number of places (say 10) for the 24 months following withdrawal.

Some indication of good reasons for non-attendance/ leaving an event would need to be identified, e.g. bereavement, accident, travel disruption. Appeal to the NCA governing body would be required.

This is perhaps something that could be discussed by the people concerned, i.e. those who are lower down the list of potential entrants, rather than those at the top.

2.4. Entrant C

The venue, hotels, and site amenities were all excellent.

It was very hard to get into the top 4 in any heat. The start line bias and the large wind shifts played a very big part in the lack of any top skipper to achieve consistency. No one won more than two 'A' races. Additionally the course setting was SO slow that many opportunities were missed to sail in good winds. We need a good RO who is fully aware of what is expected.

The umpiring was significantly lower in standard than at WC 2003. I'm concerned with the number of contacts and missed buoys not 'owned' or punished.

2.5. Entrant D

I have think about this event some times and we have many discussions on the water. I think there are 3 points with problems.

1. Some of the sailors with great names (not all) sailing at first like a bulldozer, and some sailors have problems with the mark but do not take penalties.
2. And this is the biggest problem, the umpires say nothing to all this. Sometimes they have not see this, or they want not to see this. The sailors notice this and all [do not worry about] infringements of the rules. I have run some sailing events in Germany and I know if I make some concessions on the beginning of the event the sailors then do the same. I think the umpires have little practice for rc-sailing. The situations on the water are much faster than in a full-size race. The rc sailors can anticipate [and exploit] the situations some times much quicker than the

umpires. Possibly we must have umpires or observers from the rc sailors, and a Jury from the full-size officials. I think this is the way that we must think about it.

3. The time between the races takes a long time. The race officer needs experience of rc.

And last, the organisation did the very best but I think the entry fee is very high. The sailors have a shirt and a cap and 2 small dinners. I have frequented some other events, the entry fee was smaller but the sailors have more parties, and I think it is not necessary that the organizers must have some shirts and shorts in different colours for this event.

The remaining organisation, the places for our boats, and the car service to the airport, was excellent.

I know that it is simple to say the faults from other people and it is not my manner to do this, but when we want to eliminate these points we must talk about this.

2.6. Entrant E

I do appreciate this kind of feedback!

It is not the worst event I raced, but some items made it a poor event. I think that for each big event, you only have to see how the first day is managed to know how will be the end of the week...

Whatever the ability of each actor (RC, Jury and skippers), all must be as perfect as possible: the water free of weed; the course with a long first leg; the marks not too far away; 15 minutes for a heat; the RC able to set a good course; umpires (or observers) who know how to observe RC Boats and who are known as able to do this job. If the first heats are fair, the others will be fair as well.

What we saw in Arcos wasn't pleasant for anybody, and everybody put the fault on the other (skippers vs RC and umpires, umpires vs skippers and RC, RC vs skippers and umpires!). After that, it is hard for each to do the first step to make the race better, and each new day is the same as before. In my opinion, it was possible to have a good EC with the items we had. The water place was perfect (two courses possible, high bank, facilities...). Some of the RC and umpires knew our RC boats from before, but none of them really know how to manage race observing or how to put down a course which will make the race fair. If one skipper can play to "not seen, not taken", all the other will do the same (the list of such skippers I saw is long, full of top of them, and myself too), and the event will be a bad one. I hope that each skipper knows the rules as well as possible, but of what I saw, it's far to be sure. During the twelve last years, I know some IJs unable to observe RC boats, but some of them are still here to umpire us! During the event, sometimes the same incident was called by two or more umpires, and the wrong way boat wasn't the same for each umpire...

Some ideas to improve the event management:

The IOMICA shall give a notice to the RC "how to manage a RC event", which explains how to put down a fair course, how to give races a good pace, how a notice board must be placed...

The IOMICA shall give a notice to the umpires "how to observe RC boats", which explains how to share the job, and all the little things that make a good observer.

I think umpiring is a good thing, saving protesting time. If we come back to observing, it will be a good idea to have observers from members of the NCA, known as able to observe, and make exploitable reports. I still believe that the skippers are the best observers.

The IOMICA should have a list of umpires, and also maybe RC or observers to avoid problems we had.

I liked the training/tuning area, while other skippers were racing.

2.7. Entrant F

Don't know where to start actually, but I guess the whole thing is based around organization, and /or the lack of it. No formal greeting, speech, introduction of officials and what they would do, lack of info etc.

Course setting, especially line bias which made starting on starboard nigh on impossible at times, despite my pleas to have a starboard bias for some of the races. The constant port bias allowed only a few boats to start well and the rest were left floundering, and those that did get away at the pin end had some dubious unobserved contacts. The line setting plan was not changed even when it became clear it wasn't working,

Time taken to lay the course was too long even allowing for the shifting breeze. No matter how long you waited it was not going to settle. Would have been better to just take a punt and get the race going. It could not be any worse. Time between A and E fleets was excessive for no apparent reason. Most courses were too far from the control area, and would have been better sometimes with an Olympic rather than a windward/leeward, to bring the fleet closer in. With the B course around the corner, it was nigh on impossible to see your boat on the start line, which went for the umpires as well.

The start line problems were I think the basis for a lot of the dissatisfaction with the conduct of the races, with some skippers retiring from the event. Unobserved contacts and unresolved penalties frustrated a lot of us.

If you note the finishing positions of some of what I would call, "fair, good sailors", these guys were being taken out and disadvantaged by unfair sailing. All very well the offending boat sometimes getting caught and doing a penalty, but that is small consolation for the innocent party. Maybe time to consider alternative penalties.

I term the style of sailing that is apparent in certain regions, to be "cynical", in that if you get away with it, good luck! I could go on but that would only expand on what I have outlined.

2.8. Entrant G

Event Organisation

Logistically I believe that Tito & his team made a fantastic job with the regatta site. We had 2 options with course areas, boat storage facilities were first class (maybe some hooks in sheds for rigs were missing?), pa system good (if used) launching good & a general good layout. I was made to feel very welcome to the event by 99% of those I met in Arcos & will long remember the great time I had.

Measurement

Having 2 sets of scales for both rigged hull weight, & fin/rudder weights was not nearly accurate enough with many fins seen to be passed at 2500kg when the scales were only at 5 gram increments. Not a big deal I guess but a problem nonetheless. No girth measurements were checked on any mainsails. Yes this would only slow the process of sail measuring down, but if we are to believe that a given sail has been previously check measured, then why measure it at all? Maybe some spot checking of manufactured product would appease. The checking of frequency bands with transmitters was something I had not seen before & was impressive. I did not see or hear of any clashes.

Courses/Racing

Having sailed in many dinghy regattas, it is not uncommon to sit on the water for days at a time in bigger boats waiting for steady wind. This is where the similarities in Radio Sailing & big boats should end! Due to the nature of our sport being situated along banks/shorelines etc, we will always have largely oscillating winds. We have all experienced course setting at some degree within our own regatta scenes. An experienced Radio Sailing course layer can look out over the course, weigh up whether to move the weather mark 50m further to left or right, have it done 1 minute & have his finger pushing down on the start tape once complete. To take so long waiting for the breeze to settle, with 3 RIBs & sufficient marker buoys at disposal was frustrating. I believe that twice the amount of racing could have been achieved.

I believe that the addition of coloured posts to the marker buoys was an added problem at the weather marks as tall rigs laying over the marks caused skippers to tack on conservative laylines, letting port tack skippers think there was a gap to dive into which was not there. Colour the buoys individually if required.

Umpiring

I would not be an umpire if you paid me! Yes I think most would agree that at some stage they received a call they believed was not an accurate account of an incident. It happens in any sport all over the world! In my opinion the positioning of the courses & in particular the start line, made their job that much more difficult. A more even balanced start line, with a longer first beat, would have done away with many of the problems in umpiring. Many skippers believed the standard of umpiring was better in Vancouver, I believe it was the courses that were better. It was a little odd to be chided by the head judge over the first 2 days for talking amongst other skippers. When you have 5 boats abreast coming into a leeward mark & you signal to those around of your intentions, more often than not a clean rounding is had by all, leaving judges with little to rule on. Whilst some may consider this as team sailing, I believe its something required by our sport for clean racing. I look at many M races I have sailed at home here in strong C2 suit, where all competitors talk openly as they know that without clean racing, their carbon eggshell goes to the bottom of the lake. Some very obvious mark missing in a particular B fleet race was very disappointing to witness from an experienced skipper. It made the many skippers who witnessed it ask themselves at what cost do we play to win?

Prizegiving

This should have been held indoors with the PA system rectified. As with the normal fare I believe this works best after dinner has been served. Trophies presented were lovely, though I do not believe that a special award to competitors from outside Europe was needed.

Travel Arrangements

My boat being confiscated for a day by Spanish customs was upsetting & I thank Tito for his assistance in getting it back. Maybe some checks with local authorities, regatta dispensation or even awareness could help this along in the future. Upon leaving Jerez I was asked to pay EUR440 excess baggage fee. The attendant would not be convinced that the items were sporting goods. Finally in his "unique" way he was then "generous" enough to only charge me half price 220EUR. I was thrilled! Maybe some future way of awareness to airlines that we are carrying sporting equipment may help. Not sure how this could happen but may be worth a thought in the future as many will be travelling abroad next year.

2.9. Entrant H

1) Regatta site

It seems that "standard" weather conditions in Arcos are not allowing sailing in the morning. Most of the days we have waited for wind, so instead of sailing from 10 to 19 hours we have sailed from 13:00-13:30 to 19:00 h. In 7 days foreseen for sailing we have made only 17 races.

Containers/bungalows for boat storage was very well organized as well as floating pontoons for launching the boats into the water.

On the other side, control area even situated on elevated position was TOO FAR from the racecourse. Instead of making tribune for spectators it will be much better that elevated platform for skippers and umpires near the edge of the water was arranged. Spectators will have just a good view from our control area.

2) Language and communication

English is not my first language but if I want to participate in international event in class using English as official language then I MUST be able to communicate in English. It may be pidgin/Tarzan English as well. I appreciate hospitality of all involved in the organization, but if I found in the International event that almost nobody from local members involved in organization is able to communicate with me in English (as official language of the class) then this is very frustrating. During the event there were many "incidents" because skippers call the numbers in their local languages and Umpires refused such calls as invalid because the calls was not in English. It is not so complicated to learn numbers from 0 to 9 in English! I think that most of us (skippers) will be able to learn names for nine numbers in Chinese, Swahili or even Croatian.

3) Event measurement

This was an International Championship and the measuring tank was inadequate. How is it possible that two rulers placed ca 20 mm above the water have been used to check the 1000 mm overall length of the IOM boat? When it was insisted to check the distance between the rulers it was found that the distance between them was 998 mm!

Weight of the boat during the event was checked without the drain of the bilge water and removal of the wind indicator.

4) Race courses

PRO has three rubber boats, two race courses, three control area, dozen marks and ca five race officers. As a result, we have not sailed even when there was more than enough wind, races have been abandoned when first boats came to the first mark without tacking etc. I have seen that race officers in rubber boats picked up the readings about the wind directions along the racecourse. This is the normal practice on manned sailing events when first leg is few miles long. In most occasions it would have been enough to move one of the starting marks in order to have a good starting line! One man in one rubber boat is enough for that. I appreciate decisions of the PRO to abandon the race when it was obvious that the first leg is not a proper beat to the windward. The type of the marks and their mooring was very good. We need on radio sailing events a course boat in clearly visible position preferably in front of the control area. We have A4 format course board positioned somewhere on railing behind us. General opinion is that race committee was not familiar with running the radio sailing event.

5) Umpiring

Improvements are always possible. I am not quite sure that all umpires present on our event are capable to perform their job in quick and professional manner. Our way of sailing maybe is just too fast for those familiar with slow cruising boats!

6) Internet

There were no results on the official Internet web site of the event.

2.10. Entrant I

I was not there as a competitor. It could be an interesting new topic to discuss: Probably so many days for an Event are too many, or better too many for me and for many others. This event needed 13 days of holidays (considering travels) in October (not in July or August), when we are very busy in other matters.

Probably, as I'm saying since many years, it would be better to have less days, less competitors, higher level, more satisfaction, less problems for everybody. You sailed only 17 races in 7 days. It means about 2.42 races for each day; it means about 48 minutes of sailing for each competitor in each day (10% of the total time of 480 minutes he had to be there each day to sail the Event). It was the same in Fleetwood 2002 and in Ravenna 2002, and I think it was the same in all Events we run with 80 (or more!) competitors. I remember very well when I begun to sail RC Events. In '87 in Euro M Champ in s'Hertogenbosh we were 50 competitors and we had 5 days with 27 races; in '88 in World M Champ in Berlin we were 60 competitors and we had 6 days with 21 races; and so on. More competitors = more days and less races.

So probably it would be better:

a.. less days = less problems for organizers, for competitors, for not professional, for everybody

b.. less competitors = more races and less time to wait proper heat

c.. higher level = less racing problems. With less competitors each ICA would be forced to send only the best sailors. It would mean to have before a selection in each ICA. It would mean to not have 3 Italians in the first twelve and other 10 Italians between the 47th and the 80th in the general results (for example). It would probably mean to have less racing and rule problems.

d.. more satisfaction = a real International Major Event. The skipper who gained the right to participate would be probably much more happy and proud to sail the Event, if he is there to win or only to participate.

e.. less problems for everybody = an improvement of our enjoy and of our sport.

2.11. Entrant K

Who was running the race? I believe it was a yacht club but IOMICA runs IOM's why don't they have control when things go wrong.

Crap start lines make crap races. On big open waters we should use a lot more starboard roundings. On the right hand course there was a pile up in every race. This is because you can't see the starboard lay line so everyone goes in on port, as that is the line of vision, meet the one man on starboard, and they all hope someone else will hit him. Result a pile up and no one knows whose fault, especially the judges. A good start line and course makes a good race, along with one which is not too far away. Then umpires can do their job and we can get on and sail fast and not in hope of getting around the course trouble free.

Keep the umpiring simple. Single penalties and let them impose them on the skippers.

Are we going to sail in light winds, our class we decide, if yes then we tell the RO and they set us a course.

Sort out the finish time on the days of racing. Too many times the wind comes up late in the day, A fleet is ready to sail and can't because it would start 5mins late.

Everyone is there and all want to sail, including spectators and the race management, it makes me mad every time. Either have a liaison officer or someone in management let us know what is going on, and someone to whinge to.

Must be able to change the course quickly and not dither. Start line must be flexible to a quick change.

2.12. Entrant L

About the sailors I only can say that most of them don't think that it would be easier if they try to sail fair. The spectators have seen that several boats have missed the marks, had contacts and mark contacts, but they didn't care about it and sailed on if an umpire hasn't seen it.

I'm very angry about the team racing. But nevertheless, for me it was a great event, good weather, good organisation.

2.13. Entrant M

I have not commented on any sportsmanship issues, but there were unfortunately many examples of cheating across all of the heats. Bad courses caused unnecessary pile ups, which caused umpires to miss things, which caused more skippers to risk approaching marks on port, which caused more incidents, which caused more skippers to risk piling in on port, which caused umpires to despair etc. etc.! There seems to be a culture developing that ignores rule 2 and relies totally on being told to do your penalties. If the officials didn't see it, it didn't happen. Taking responsibility for your own rule breaches seems increasingly rare. One sailor's comments at the end of the practise day were a sad reflection of some people's sailing; "Some of this lot even cheat whilst we're practising!"

I feel that anyone who enters an international event should be entitled to feel confident that, before they have spent hundreds of pounds getting to the venue, hiring a car, checking into a hotel and persuading family and friends to come along and watch, they know exactly what they can expect from the racing, regardless of where they are in the world.

I would like to stress that the general level of organisation in order to host the event was first class. The infrastructure, venue, consideration for spectators and facilities were excellent, as was the registration and measurement process. The location also had everything required to host a good event; lots of accommodation, various restaurants and a central hotel where all the social events could be organised.

However, many aspects of the event did not run in a totally satisfactory manner. By being critical about various issues I do not wish to belittle all of the hard work that was undoubtedly put in by the race committee, international judges and event organisers during the 10 days because, as with most aspects of model yachting, they are volunteers and without them there wouldn't be any Championships. Having said that, I think that it is very important to learn from these events to ensure that areas of concern are highlighted and improved for the benefit of all future model yachting events.

1. Opening Ceremony/Briefing

Problem: Although this is generally a formality and should always reflect the culture of the hosts as they see fit, it should also contain some form of welcome and skipper's briefing. The most important reason for this is so that we (the competitors) know who all the officials and organisers are and how they are going to run our week. In Arcos, the failure to do this caused problems quite early on with many frustrations being incorrectly vented at umpires for race management issues and the chairman of the jury venting his frustrations on us, when many were

quite justified in their feelings of utter confusion as to the intended workings of the umpiring system.

Suggestion: Good communications between race officials and organisers is absolutely essential to foster good relations at an event. It will establish proper routes of complaint and advice as appropriate between both parties rather than establishing an air of unapproachability. Opening ceremonies, therefore, should always include introductions and involve a full skipper's briefing at some stage during the proceedings.

2. Course Setting

Problem: The courses were not good for the majority of the week and, in particular, the start lines were unacceptably biased and too short all week. Refusing to even contemplate setting a course before all four rescue boats sent back the same wind direction reading, just seemed the biggest waste of time. I accept that the wind did vary in strength and direction considerably but at some point you just have to get on with it! It wasn't unusual for skippers to sail around the start area for some time whilst the race officials contemplated the wind, only for their prevaricating to ensure that just as they were about to start the wind would shift to its next ten minute slot. Much quicker observations of the boats on the water and less attention to compass readings were required together with more efficient course setters on the water. Skippers frustrations caused by these delays were further exacerbated by the fact the courses that were set were often poor when the countdown began. We lost count of the number of heats that were abandoned due to all the boats laying the first mark without tacking.

The constant pile ups at the leeward end of the start line and at the windward mark caused huge problems for the skippers but also for the umpires as they a) couldn't keep up with things and b) couldn't identify the offending boats which got lost in the crowd. The refusal to lengthen lines and stretch the first beat appeared to be for the benefit of the umpire's vision. It was maddening that the 'big picture' could not be seen! Longer, bigger courses with evenly biased start lines may well be further away in reality but the boats become more spaced out and arrive at the first mark in 2's and 3's instead of 7's and 8's. The incidents are automatically reduced and those that do occur can be properly and fairly judged.

Suggestion: Ensure that the PRO or assistant PRO has a recognised and competent level of experience of courses for model yachts. This should be coupled with a competent and efficient course layer in the boat who understands what he is being asked to do. Good examples of these are often one step ahead of the PRO and know exactly what they are about to be asked to do and why they are doing it.

3. Race Management

Problem: To postpone or not to postpone, that is the question. As with the course setting, there seemed to be a lack of understanding of what happens at model yachting events worldwide. My own personal view is that sailing should continue regardless of the conditions (thunderstorms excepted!) but I do understand that many do not think it is correct to sail in virtually no wind. I accept this but surely sailing should continue in light winds, even if they are variable in direction. I enjoy sailing in these conditions as I have a boat suited to it and it takes a particular skill to get around the course. Not once did 'A' heat race in light airs and calm water and it was similar for other heats.

I was particularly annoyed on the penultimate day of the Championship when the race committee considered there to be enough wind to run a fun, free for all race to entertain the local school children, rather than proceeding with E heat. We had already been hanging around for an hour and a half due to similar reasons as to

those given above and my chances of closing the gap to challenge for the European title were being severely reduced by a lack of urgency to get on with the event. The result of all of this was the completion of just 85 heats in 60 hours of available sailing time. Not very impressive.

Suggestion: Consider specifying reasons for postponing a heat and adding a clause to the sailing instructions (similar to the MYA SI's) to ensure that the next heat shall start as soon as practicable after the completion of the previous heat.

4. Umpiring

Problem: As already discussed, many of the problems experienced by the umpires were caused by the poor courses but I think that these were compounded by the decision to impose the 720 degree penalty. The requirement for umpires to give skippers 5 to 10 seconds to respond after calling a contact, only served to lead umpires to miss the build up and sail numbers of the next succession of incidents. In theory it is a very good system but in practice it suffered the same problems that eventually saw DIRBOS abandoned by the MYA. The bottom line in Arcos was that the umpiring system could never operate at a fast enough pace to ensure everyone was treated fairly.

Suggestion: I believe that umpiring in some form should remain, as it is unquestionably better at an international level than the delays caused by the large number of protests that can be created using observers and a jury. My feeling is that a combination of proactive and reactive umpiring/refereeing is required. Umpires should immediately give penalties on incidents which involve contacts and then qualify the penalty. For example, "Penalty 39, port and starboard" or "Penalty 105, windward boat" or "Penalty 95, mark touch". In my experience of observing at MYA events, your gut reaction to how you see an incident is usually a fairly reliable guide to what actually happened. The advantage of this is that it is quick to administer, allowing skippers to hear how the incident has been seen by an umpire, even if they don't necessarily agree with the penalty. Because the calls are quick, the sail numbers called for penalties can be noted almost without taking your eyes off the race course and then crossed through as the penalties are completed. It avoids the memory test that the umpires were struggling with in Arcos as they would no longer have to retain the incident information as they waited to see if any skippers were going to acknowledge responsibility or protest. Instant calling of penalties is similar to what happened in Croatia in 2001. However, proactive judging should not be extended to non-contact incidents as it was in Fleetwood 2002. These should remain a decision for the skippers involved; i.e. if you decide to dip my stern whilst on starboard, it is your decision whether or not you wish to protest. If you do decide to hail protest then the umpires can then respond as per their permitted hails (not seen, dismissed, penalty 39 etc...) If it is not seen then a protest can still be taken before a jury by the skippers involved if they so wish.

Whatever is decided upon after these discussions conclude, it is imperative that the system is used before the next big event to ensure the first few days of a championship are not spent learning a system and ironing out problems which arise.

5. HMS and Entry Size

Problem: I'm not sure that this is really a problem but many have suggested that 84 is too many and that, due to the high standard in 'A' and 'B' heats, more than 4 should move up and down each race. Umpires also suggested that 20 was too many for one heat but again I feel this impression was falsely given by the poor courses. 20 boat heats seemed small in Vancouver!

6. Social Communications and Prize Giving

Problem: As someone who was fortunate to have three 'spectators' supporting me for the week it was, at times, quite difficult to let them know what was happening in the evenings due to a confusion of information. For example, the BBQ at the yacht club on the Monday night suddenly became a BBQ at the hotel two hours before it was due to start which then turned out to be a formal three course meal at the hotel. Further confusion ensued on the last day when it suddenly became apparent that the racing would be taken up to the 16.15 deadline whilst the prize giving 'lunch' was starting at 14.30!

When the lunch and the prize giving was able to begin there were more than a few raised eyebrows at the presentation of local plate art to the four non-European skippers whilst the 68 Europeans not fortunate enough to finish in the top ten received nothing.

Suggestion: This is probably out of the hands of IOMICA as it should be down to the host country to organise the social side however they wish, but guidance could be given to ensure that a social calendar is available to all at the beginning of the week so that friends, family and competitors can plan their week accordingly. To give a memento to all competitors, race officials and international jury members is also something I believe should happen, but that's just my opinion.

2.14. Entrant N

Heat sizes: 20 boats per heat seemed to work much worse than it did in Vancouver. Although we had an elevated control area perhaps we were not as high up as in Vancouver and we were definitely further away from the course area than in Vancouver. My feeling is also that leaving the "4-boats up 4-boats down" as it is when expanding the heat size to 20 boats makes the competition tougher and sometimes creates aggressive sailing to be in the top four. Whether going to 16 boats and having one fourth go up and down or having 20 boats and five up and down would alleviate this I don't know... Particularly in course area "B" it was sometimes very hard to see the sail numbers of the boats from the control area. This gives you an idea of the distance.

Umpiring: I understand that most of the umpires were not experienced with radio sailing before this event. In the beginning of the event very few umpires made calls. This got better through the week. When these issues were sorted out I think umpiring worked fairly well. There were cases where an umpire should have repeated a call because the competitor did not hear and there were also many cases where competitors had not understood the 360/720 system.

Heat management: the excellent course board we had in Vancouver worked very well. In arcos we only had printed pages with heat composition that were posted on the notice board at an unknown time before your heat. At least two times a competitor missed a heat simply because he did not know he should be sailing. There also seemed to be a big delay between the A heat and the E heat. This got a little better by the end of the week. Promoted boats were also called by number by the end of the week so they would know they have been promoted.

Race management: I think particularly the course laying was quite slow. We sailed at an inland site where necessarily the wind shifts and changes a lot. Because of this the organisers had prepared two course areas. This was fine. However changing the course for a wind shift or changing course area always seemed to take at least 20-30 minutes. By this time the wind had usually oscillated back to its original heading and the new course was as skewed as the old one. The people in the RIB's did not seem to take initiative for changing the course themselves. They were ordered over the radio (by the PRO?) to do small incremental changes to the course. From what I saw only one RIB out of three or four was working at one time although all were on the water. It seemed that the

course laying team used wind headings from three areas from the course (windward, middle, leeward) to determine if the wind was stable and its direction. Perhaps this is unduly time consuming and complicated for radio sailing? An opinion shared by many was that one knowledgeable person in one RIB could have laid/altere the course in about 5 min... The system with multiple marks and the course indicated by flags attached to three of the marks worked well. There was only one C-heat I think where the leading boat rounded the wrong leeward mark...

Sportsmanship and rule adherence: I did not find any big issues in this area. My observations are necessarily from only a small sample of boats that I sailed close to. I agree with the umpires that shouts or comments on the umpires' decisions by competitors were unnecessary; this was addressed in a notice on the notice board.

To summarize I think there are two or three points that will stay as memories from Arcos: The course laying was slow. There were too many boats in incidents that were to far away. And finally the wind or rather the lack of it! There is not much the organizers can do about the wind, but maybe this should be addressed at the IOMICA level when choosing sites for events.

2.15. Entrant O

1) the marks were, most of the time, too far away and 2) there was a bias on the line, most of the time, which made the starts very difficult. These were the cause of most of the problems, i.e. many rule infringements at the starts and at the marks which overloaded the umpires or went unnoticed or were ignored and many skippers became very frustrated.

The chief umpire "organised" the umpires in the later races by loud verbal commands as to which parts of the fleet they should monitor as the race progressed which did not seem to me to help. It also interfered with skippers making their calls at the same time.

That said, some skippers were not blameless and became verbally aggressive, which is unacceptable, but I don't believe many skippers cheat on purpose: mostly they make a mistake through poor judgement and that judgement was tested beyond the limit in Arcos!

Also there was much time wasted in getting heats started, again wrong priorities. The races which were most enjoyed (by all concerned!) with the least infringements were those from the control area adjacent the cabins (I think it was area A) where the marks were more easily visible.

The location and the infrastructure brought in were superb - four inflatables at our disposal, cabins to store the boats, cafe on site, very local accommodation, excellent pa system.

I don't have a problem with a 720 penalty for those who cheat - the problem arises when only those close to the glare of the umpire get caught for what is perhaps a small infringement while a port boat causing havoc at the windward mark gets off scott-free because it's all so far away.