

**INTERNATIONAL ONE METRE  
INTERNATIONAL CLASS ASSOCIATION**

# Umpiring for IOM Fleet Racing

## Discussion Paper

Version 1.2  
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### 1. OBJECTIVES

- 1.1. To have all Part 2 protests and RRS 2, 31, and 42 incidents decided at the time of the incident.
- 1.2. To have independent and qualified witnesses for any other rule breaches which are brought to the attention of the protest committee.
- 1.3. To retain the basic principle of racing where the competitor takes responsibility for breaching any rule.
- 1.4. To discourage evasion or avoidance of this responsibility.

### 2. CURRENT SITUATION

#### 2.1. International

- 2.1.1. Since 2001, world and continental championships in the IOM class have been umpired. Each event has had its own set of umpiring rules, and each event has shown certain strengths and weaknesses of these rules.
- 2.1.2. Prior to 2001, international IOM events used observers to notify incidents. There is little doubt that the move to umpiring has brought great benefit to the quality of racing, but there has been an associated increase in event costs.

#### 2.2. National

- 2.2.1. Practice differs by country. Most larger events (between 36 and 80 boats) have observers, sometimes full-time and employed by the Race Committee, sometimes drawn from the pool of competitors not currently racing, acting under E3.1. Some smaller events (36 boats or fewer) do not use observers and rely instead upon the Race Officer acting under RRS 60.2.

### 3. APPROACHES TO UMPIRING

- 3.1. In many sports, for example soccer, an umpire calls and judges rule infringements, without regard for the competitors' opinion as to whether a breach occurred, and without any provision for competitors to accept responsibility for a breach on their own initiative.
- 3.2. For IOM fleet racing, the basic principle of sportsmanship and the rules is preferred:

“Competitors in the sport of sailing are governed by a body of rules that they are expected to follow and enforce. A fundamental principle of sportsmanship is that when competitors break a rule they will promptly take a penalty or retire.”
- 3.3. In this case, the role of the umpire is to encourage sportsmanship and discourage evasion or avoidance of responsibility on the part of the competitor.
- 3.4. We understand that a protest hail is both an allegation of a breach of the rules, and an advice from the protestor that s/he is aggrieved.
  - 3.4.1. Where it is a competitor who contemplates a protest hail, current practice does not seek to unduly interfere in the right of a competitor **not** to make a protest, except in cases of damage or injury, since a competitor may not feel aggrieved even when a rule is breached.
  - 3.4.2. Where it is an umpire who contemplates imposing a penalty without a protest by another boat, the umpire is acting both on behalf of the race committee and on behalf of the protest committee, and exercises some discretion as to whether s/he believes the race or protest committee would rightly be aggrieved in the circumstances.

### 4. CHARACTERISTICS OF RADIO SAILING

#### 4.1. Heat racing

- 4.1.1. For fleets larger than about 16 boats, a race is divided into heats. Usually, the first four boats in a heat are promoted to the next higher heat, and the bottom four boats are demoted to the next lower heat.
- 4.1.2. Without a system of quickly and effectively deciding protests, the “Heat Racing System” (HRS) provides for the promotion and relegation of boats to take place in the next race. This allows racing to continue with the next heat while protests arising from the previous heat are heard by the protest committee.
- 4.1.3. With an effective umpiring system, the “Heat Management System” (HMS) provides for immediate promotion of boats into the next heat. HMS is greatly preferred over HRS because any boat has the opportunity, through immediate promotion, to win the race.

#### 4.2. Races per day

Each heat usually involves 12 to 15 minutes of racing. A good day of radio sailing involves 20 to 30 heats.

#### 4.3. Close racing 1

Boats in the IOM class are particularly evenly matched. Most of the 20 boats in a heat will arrive at the first windward mark within 10 seconds of each other, and 4 to 8 overlapped boats may well arrive at the first leeward mark simultaneously.

#### 4.4. Close racing 2

Because of the close racing, a boat seeking to get well clear of other boats as soon after an incident as possible in order to take a penalty may find that this takes an amount of time which

- 4.4.1. an umpire might otherwise think is an unreasonable delay, and
- 4.4.2. keeps an umpire focused on watching for the closure of a particular incident at the expense of being able to note other prospective or actual incidents.

#### **4.5. Distance between skipper and boat**

Control of a boat is done from the bank or shore. For international races, competitors are usually provided with an elevated platform as their control area, but such a platform may not be at the water's edge. The distance between skippers and the furthest mark may well be such that sail digits, 110 mm high, cannot be reliably read. Correspondingly it may well be difficult to judge overlaps, mark roundings, and contacts.

#### **4.6. Relative speed**

While the boat speed of an IOM is modest in absolute terms at around 1.3 m/sec, an IOM will travel through a two-length zone and reach the mark in around 1.5 seconds. The zone is in fact set to 4 boat lengths for radio sailing (E1.3). In relative terms, the zone should in theory be set to something more like 8 or 12 boat lengths to afford the IOM sailor similar reaction and response times to those enjoyed by full-size keelboat sailors.

### **5. ISSUES IN UMPIRING AN EVENT**

- 5.1. Competitors need to accept that an umpire may not be in a position to judge every incident. On the other hand, seasoned competitors know they are playing a game and will push the system to its limits. If many incidents pass without umpire attention, competitors may begin to feel that, unless an umpire imposed a penalty, there was nothing which required their action.
- 5.2. The standard of evidence must be clearly and carefully articulated. Civil law employs "on balance of probability", while criminal law employs "beyond reasonable doubt". Umpiring a sailing event may require the even stronger "indisputable and certain". For example, what is the call for a boat passing close to a distant mark if the mark bobbed? If an umpire is not certain, a competitor may feel it appropriate to attempt to bully the umpire into a retraction.
- 5.3. Are there incidents, for example the extreme end of a boom touching a mark during rounding, which an umpire might reasonably judge as "incidental" and "not affecting the result"? Comments in 3.4.2, 7.8, and 7.11 apply.
- 5.4. Very few competitors call protests correctly. Almost none are called twice, and few mention the numbers of both of the boats involved. Many competitors will favour first name terms instead, and many will not use the language of the event, usually English, in their protests. Comments in 3.4.1 and 7.5 apply.
- 5.5. Competitors, and non-racing competitors watching a heat, may be in the habit of advising racing friends and colleagues, contrary to E4.2.
  - 5.5.1. Advice might be given openly, for example, hailing, "The next mark is number 2".
  - 5.5.2. Advice might be given surreptitiously, for example, walking alongside the friend and whispering.
  - 5.5.3. More subtly, advice might be given by loudly asking questions of another spectator while near the friend, for example, asking, "I wonder if the port end of the line is the best place to start?"

- 5.6. A distinction is sometimes made between “reactive” and “proactive” umpiring. We may define “reactive” as umpiring which reacts to the protest hails of competitors, and which otherwise does not initiate penalties. “Proactive” umpiring, on the other hand, does not necessarily wait for a competitor hail. Penalties may be called directly any contact is seen and no boat hails an acknowledgement of infringement or obviously start to take a penalty.

In practice, there is a range of “proactiveness” which an umpire might adopt, and the issue will almost certainly need an entry in the Sailing Instructions, agreement amongst the umpires and Race Committee, and clear and open communication with the competitors.

## 6. RECOMMENDED UMPIRING ARRANGEMENTS

- 6.1. It can be tempting to allocate an umpire a mark to watch. In this case, the first incident at that mark is picked up, but the succeeding incidents are not. The “mark” umpire becomes immediately fully loaded monitoring the first incident, and misses the next (several) incidents until the first is cleared. It is recommended that the umpiring system instead involves an umpire monitoring four or five boats in proximity as they race around the course.
- 6.2. There should be at least one umpire for every four boats racing.
- 6.3. Umpires should remain in the control area while umpiring, and all umpires’ calls should be made from the control area. This retains consistency with E3.1, and is fairer on the competitors.
- 6.4. Similarly, there should be no augmentation aids such as binoculars used by umpires, even if the reason is simply to identify sail numbers.
- 6.5. It is not uncommon for two separate umpires to notice an incident, follow its development, and then almost simultaneously hail two different decisions. Allocating an umpire a specific part of the heat helps prevent this, but it may still be necessary for some further arrangement to be put in place.

## 7. COMMENTARY ON CHANGES TO THE RACING RULES

- 7.1. The following comments are keyed to the modified appendix Q for radio sailing.
- 7.2. *When a boat protests under a rule of Part 2 or under rule 31.1 or 42, she is entitled to a hearing only if an umpire hails that the incident was not observed, or no umpire hail is made at all.* This changes experimental appendix Q. The intention is to accept that a radio sailing heat is often fast and confusing and not every incident will be seen, and that this fact should not prevent access to a hearing for incidents not otherwise judged or seen.
- 7.3. *A boat may promptly acknowledge breaking a rule by taking a penalty under rule 44 as modified by E4.4.* That is, when a boat acknowledges an infringement, her penalty is one turn.
- 7.4. *If no boat takes a penalty, an umpire shall hail a decision as provided in rule Q3.* An umpire-imposed penalty is two turns. The intention is to encourage adherence to the basic principle of sportsmanship in sailing.
- 7.5. *“Protest refused”.* This is an umpire hail which closes an incident when the protest hail was incorrectly made. That is, the hail did not specify the sail numbers of the boat(s) involved, or it was not hailed twice. An umpire, faced with a protest hail which clearly fails to meet the requirements of E5.2, may nevertheless act under rule Q4. It is not unknown for a competitor to deliberately hail a technically-invalid protest in an attempt to ensure the incident is closed without penalty to any boat.

- 7.6. *If an umpire is unable to distinguish a boat's sail number, s/he may identify the boat by description, and then as soon as possible, by sail number.* It is common to be unable to immediately identify a boat by sail number. The angle of the sun, the proximity of other boats, the distances, the sail sheeting angle, and so on, may prevent immediate identification. The inability of an umpire to immediately identify a boat shall not be grounds for the use of binoculars, for example.
- 7.7. *Rule 64.1(b) is changed so that the provision for exonerating a boat may be applied by the umpires without a hearing, and it takes precedence over any conflicting rule of this appendix.* This is particularly relevant at mark roundings when the inside boat may make contact with the mark because of insufficient room being given by the outside boat.
- 7.8. *When a boat breaks rule 31.1 or 42 and does not take a penalty, gains an advantage despite taking a penalty, breaks a rule deliberately, breaks rule 2, or fails to take a penalty when required by an umpire, an umpire may penalize her without a protest by another boat.* These powers are given to the umpire with the intention, as before, of encouraging competitors to adhere to the basic principle of sportsmanship. Umpires are requested to use these powers in this light.
- 7.9. In particular, provision (e), *where the Sailing Instructions so provide, has contact with another boat and one or both of them does not immediately take a penalty or acknowledge that she intends to do so,* allows for so-called “proactive” umpiring.
- 7.10. *A boat which intends to take a penalty shall hail “Acknowledge” or “OK”.* Racing in the IOM class is particularly close. A boat may find it takes some time to extricate itself from the fleet and conform to the requirements of RRS 44.2, and an umpire may not be accustomed this feature of radio sailing. Accordingly, some indulgence is due to the boat. Correspondingly, it shall be a requirement for a boat to so advise the umpires. Failure to do so shall be grounds for an additional penalty under Q4.
- 7.11. *If the protest committee decides that a breach of a rule has had no significant effect on the outcome of a race, it may impose a penalty or make any other arrangement it decides is fair for all boats affected, which may be to impose no penalty.* It may worth pointing out that an umpire acts on behalf of the protest committee in imposing any penalty, and the provision of this rule applies equally.