

# IOM European Championship 2002

**Fleetwood                      2nd to 7th June 2002**

## **Race Officer's Report**

Race Officer - Richard Rowan  
ISAF-RSD delegate - Zoran Grubisa  
Chairman of the International Jury - David Lees

Report prepared 19/06/2002

### **General**

79 competitors from 14 countries took part in the event, with 21 races completed.

The race management team involved up to 11 people, with event organisation by Fleetwood involving between 4 and 5 other people.

The International Jury and Umpire panel comprised 6 International Jurors/Umpires and 1 UK National Judge.

### **Issues**

#### **(1) - Sailing Instructions**

The Sailing Instructions were not issued in any form until 2pm on 1st June. In fact, a lot of time was spent on the morning of 1st June by DL, ZG and RR in sorting out and finalising several paragraphs. Additionally, a modification to RRS Appendix G in respect of sail identification marks was also incorporated. There were also changes to the IOM Class Rules issued within 2 days of the commencement of the event.

It is my opinion that the Sailing Instructions should have and could have been in place at least 2 to 3 weeks prior to the event. The time spent by myself in finalising the SIs on the Saturday morning was time wasted in going through other necessary detailed race management preparation activities. Additionally, the task of preparing copies of the SIs for each competitor on the Saturday afternoon became simply impossible to complete.

The modification to sail identification marks could certainly have been dealt with earlier - it was brought to the attention of RSD by the MYA some 9 months or so before the event.

DL kept referring to the fact that it was the responsibility of the Race Committee to issue the NoR and SIs. However, in the run up to the event, it was not clear at which point the running of the event passed from the hands of RSD into the hands of the organising Division Member and then from the DM to the actual Race Committee for the event. Clearer guidance should be provided by RSD on this topic, particularly when the planning for an event is compressed into less than one year (this applying to Fleetwood) rather than two (as would normally be the case eg Vancouver).

In summary, issuing of paperwork like the NoR and SIs should be so routine as to be in place well before the start of the event.

Amendment number 3 to the SIs was issued on Tuesday 4th June and was concerned with boats being released from the bank between the Preparatory and Starting signals. The amendment specifically ruled this out. In discussion with various knowledgeable parties, it emerged that such wording was normally added to the SIs when the conditions warranted it. My opinion is that it should always be present in the SIs and should also be added to RRS Appendix E at the first available opportunity. This would mean that there would then be one less "local" issue to deal with in the SIs.

The Standard Sailing Instruction guide as available from the RSD website should now be modified to take account of the detailed issues raised at Fleetwood, and should be used for the next international event with as few modifications as possible.

## **(2) - Complexity of the rules governing our branch of sailing.**

It is my strong opinion that the extensive use of cross referral between Appendix G of the RRS, HMS 2002, the SIs and the main body of the RRS is leading to the situation where very few sailors will actually understand exactly what the rules say. I found it very difficult to assimilate all the relevant rules in my preparation for the event, to the extent that I was not confident that I would be able to apply a rule correctly when called upon to do so. *And I did not have to be on top of the rules applying to on the water situations!*

RSD should urgently promote a special print of the RRS specifically for rc yachting - this print having the provisions of Appendix G included in the main body of the RRS. ZG had a RRS book where the English version was displayed on the left hand page and presumably a Croatian interpretation of the same page was displayed on the right hand page.

## **(3) - Sail Identification Marks**

The RRS 2001 to 2004 led to problems with sail identification marks for rc yachts. As was referred to in (1) above, an appendix was added to the SIs to ensure that all IOMs taking part in the event irrespective of the date on which they were first measured would pass sail identification requirements.

The effect of bringing sail identification requirements under the RRS is to make them a protest issue rather than a pre-measurement issue. So, as a consequence, SIMs perhaps became more of an issue at this event than hitherto.

The specific problems arising at the event were as follows:

- (a) The font chosen by CAN 88. This was very different from the typical arial/helvetica style that was the previous norm. The style of the font was discussed with the skipper of CAN88 prior to the event, he was willing to alter the font but as RO, I could see no reason prior to the event for requiring CAN88 to do so, other than on the very subjective requirement of legibility. However, during the event, on at least one occasion, I made an incorrect number call when CAN88 was over the line at the start. Later in the week, several competitors observed that CAN88's numbers were indistinct at the far side of Fleetwood lake. However, CAN88's SIMs were inked onto his sails and the skipper of CAN88 saw fit to re-ink his numbers towards the middle of the week, thereby making them more distinct again (see section b following).
- (b) Sail numbers of a light colour or sail numbers inked onto sails - these are simply not distinct enough. At least one competitor (ITA05) was asked to re-ink his mainsail numbers - they were originally inked in red - he complied immediately with our request to do so and chose to re-ink them in black.
- (c) The long standing problem of 80 and 08. We had both an 80 and an 08 sailing at the event. On at least one occasion, when both boats were sailing in the same heat, an umpire made an incorrect call. This issue may now be capable of being resolved by a new sail number material (seen on one of the German boats) which presents a white face on its reverse side thereby effectively stopping the number from being seen on the wrong side of the sail.
- (d) The sail number and country letter positioning on most of the Italian entrants was generally out of compliance even with the reduced requirements of the SI Appendix B. The Event Measurers instructed a number of the Italian entrants to make significant corrections to their number spacing at the end of racing on Sunday.

Almost without exception, the ITA entrants failed the horizontal spacing requirements for their country letters - the Race Committee decided not to take any action as this was considered to be a very trivial matter. The Italian team explained that the layout of their country letters was made by reference to a template provided by their National committee.

I would make a very strong recommendation that sail numbers should be restricted to an upright sans-serif Arial/Helvetica font and should be coloured black only. Such an edict should be in place well before the 2003 IOM World Championships at Vancouver.

#### **(4) - Courses**

Some of the entrants expressed disappointment at the poor courses that the race team were forced to adopt at various times during the event - an estimate of the time spent sailing directly across or diagonally across the lake is up to 20% of the total sailing time. It might be considered that the lake at Fleetwood is not optimum for radio controlled yachting events.

If RSD considers this to be a negative side to the Fleetwood event, then it must lay out clear criteria for the venues for international events.

#### **(5) - Time between one heat finishing and the next going on the water**

It was generally agreed that the time between heats was relatively long at the start of the week but came down considerably as the race team got into the "swing of things" later in the week. The delays at the start of the week were primarily caused by the race team's perception that they needed to be very careful about preparing the race control sheets in conjunction with HMS2002. Also, it is worth observing that a number of the members of the race team had little experience in the running of large events such as the Europeans.

As RO, obviously it was my responsibility to sort out such problems and I think that this was done successfully. However, I would observe that being able to run international championships requires a number of people with experience, and that there are not many people around both with the experience and the willingness to help with the running of such events. I would note that the time that I spent on Saturday 1st June in preparing the SIs would have been better spent in going through procedures such as heat changeovers.

I also think that it is time that either RSD or a DM sponsors the writing of a computer program that will cope with the complexities of heat management systems. The computer program must be able to allow input of results as they happen on the water, so that the next heat control can be immediately printed out.

When the Scottish District of the MYA ran the UK IOM Nationals in 1999, one of the Scottish District skippers wrote a computer program which was able to cope with heats in an expeditious manner, to the extent that heat placings could be acquired on a Palm Pilot computer and imported into the main program running on a PC. However, that skipper was given no encouragement to continue the development of his system after the event had finished.

#### **(6) - Innovations**

It seems to me that two new ideas and one relatively new idea were tried at Fleetwood, namely:

- (a) The new ideas were HMS2002 and umpires allowed outside the control area.
- (b) The relatively new idea was umpiring (as implemented at Croatia).

It is my opinion that we should have restricted the new ideas to preferably one but not more than two of the above. The point being that the difficulties of coping with all of these fell entirely on the umpires and the race management team.

#### **Umpires**

I believe that ultimately the umpires and their approach was good. However, if the rc yachting fraternity simply observed the rules to a higher extent, umpires would not be necessary. So, from past experience, it would seem that umpiring must therefore be proactive for the time being.

The umpires debriefing at the end of each day's sailing was very useful. It is a great pity that more skippers did not attend the debriefings.

I am attaching as a Appendix the contents of an email on umpiring as written by David Lees following the event.

## **Appendix**

**From:** David Lees

**Sent:** 18 June 2002 09:37

**To:** Don Martin

**Cc:** Zoran Grubisa; Siegfried Uecker; Robin Richardson; Rafael Iturrioz; Philip Gage; Peter Valentino; Mark Dennis; David Rose; Richard Rowan

**Subject:** Umpiring

I promised that I would write to you on the subject of umpiring and I am copying my comments to the other umpires and to Richard Rowan.

### **1. Do we need umpiring?**

I think we must start by accepting that HMS is here to stay. I understand that Richard and others accept that there must be some fine tuning. Indeed it would be surprising if that were not so. If we are to have HMS, there must be an ability to decide quickly who is to be promoted and who is not.

I think it would be possible to devise a method of very quick protests, possibly by one IJ conducting a form of arbitration, avoiding paperwork completely. This would have problems in that the decision would not be by an IJ or a panel, but this could be overcome. To my mind the question to ask is whether that would be any fairer than umpiring, which must be entirely arbitrary.

If Fleetwood was typical, model sailors are probably more likely to have incidents during the race than big boat sailors. I think this is for a number of reasons, for instance, judgements as to distance between boats, etc., is more difficult and boats are not normally damaged by contact. If the boats become entangled, redress can be obtained, although the automatic demotion must be worrying.

We did not keep a record of the number of calls and in particular we do not know how many of those calls could have affected the first four places in a heat. I suspect however that there were a number. If there was a reversion to protests, there would be a big advantage for "non-promotees" to knock out a "promotee" because of an incident early in the race and I suspect that this would lead to an awful lot of protests.

I think therefore that umpiring must be the way forward.

### **2. Should umpiring be reactive or pro-active?**

You know as well as I do that it is much easier to umpire on a re-active basis than on a pro-active one. It also overcomes a number of problems. Some of the complaints we received were in situations where the right of way boat had agreed that he would let the give way boat through. We saw an infringement and penalised it, to the chagrine of both parties. In a proactive situation this cannot be avoided.

On the first day of the regatta we dealt reactively, but in practice very few protests were called. There was a feeling that we were not doing our job because we were ignoring obvious breaches. We therefore changed our technique and called everything we saw. I know you did the same in Croatia and assume that you had the same problem.

I think it is a pity but cannot see any viable alternative to being pro-active. This is the fault of the competitors but until they are prepared to obey the rules, there are two alternatives: we either accept that they will bump and bore their way round the course or we penalise them without waiting for a protest call.

I think I prefer the latter, but it is obviously for the class to decide, not the umpires. I would suggest that the policy decision is made before Vancouver.

### **3. Where should umpires view the race?**

The two sides of the argument are whether we should have the same view of the course as the competitors or whether we should get the best view of what actually happens and work from that base. There are merits on both views and both were expressed strongly at Fleetwood. Personally I would feel very uncomfortable if I was restricted to the control area view. Even in restricted waters like Fleetwood, it is not possible to really see what has happened at the far side of the lake. If we are to umpire, we must do it on the basis of what actually happened rather than by guesswork.

One of the problems however is to know on the far side if there has been a Rule 19 call for water. I have not been able to think of a solution, particularly as the calls can be made when the boats are a long way from the bank, because of the difficulty of the competitors judging the distance accurately.

Incidentally, I do not see a problem when the lake is bigger than Fleetwood. It may be necessary to put the umpires in boats, so they can be near the far marks.

#### **4. How many umpires are needed?**

I was asked to find eight umpires but was only able to get seven. I must have asked about twenty people, but June is a busy month. Some were sailing and many judging or umpiring at other regatta. After seeing what happens, I do not think eight would have been enough. If we are to walk up and down, as we did at Fleetwood, we have a very tiring day. We estimated that we walked 30 to 40 miles during the week. Sometimes we had to run. In addition we were concentrating hard and hearing protests, which is in itself quite an exhausting process.

Getting tired outing itself is not the end of the world, but I have no doubt that our judgmental ability went down substantially in the late afternoon, and that is important.

I think you had 12 umpires at Croatia and I suspect that that is the minimum. I think six or seven on the course at any one time is enough, but there should be substantial periods for rest. In addition a jury or, at least, a panel of three, should be available at all times, since speed of decision is so important.

#### **5. What went wrong**

1. I think when we got tired, the percentage of wrong calls and missed calls went up
2. There was a problem with calls for water under Rule 19. If we have people on the far side of the lake, I can't see a solution to this, particularly if the competitors have a long and walkable control area. We could have a "shouter" who does nothing except call out decisions and repeat such calls to the other umpires. I don't think even that would work.
3. Double calls, where two umpires call the same incident. This is bad enough when the two calls are the same. When the umpires disagree and both boats are called it is much more serious. Again I can't see a solution but ideas would be good.
4. The nature of fleet racing means that it is usually impossible to see the full build up to an incident. This means that many calls are arbitrary. As a result we often don't bring rule 15 and 16 into the equation.
5. There was often a long delay between the incident and the call. I think this improved towards the end of the week.

#### **6. What was good?**

1. We had very few "rush" protests, which meant that a good number of races could be sailed.
2. With some major exceptions, I think that most of the competitors liked what we did. I suspect some of the "anitis" were people who felt they had a bad call and some were opposed to the system on principle, probably because of internal politics of which I am now aware.
3. Towards the end of the week we started calling the reason for the decision. I would suggest that this becomes standard. My impression that some umpires found this difficult and it may be something you should specify when you look for your umpires in Vancouver.

Don, you suggested that we dealt with this by questions, and I hope I have posed some relevant ones. I have also tried to give my answers. I am sure that there are many other views, and there will probably be violent disagreement with some of mine. That will all contribute to the debate.

David