

BOSHAM SAILING CLUB

Guidance Notes for Assistant Race Officers (ARO)

assisting the Race Officer at Club Dinghy, Classic Dayboat (CDB) and Chichester Scow racing.

All races starting from the Quay (Raptackle) or Cobnor start lines are under the control of and are the responsibility of the Race Officer (RO).

He/she will not have time during racing to explain all the procedures, so intelligent assistance will be appreciated! These notes should enable you to understand your role and what's going on. You can also look at the Club website under 'Race Management'.

Who is Racing? There are different 'fleets' which race regularly: the Chichester Scows, the CDBs, the Fast Handicap and the Cadet/Slow Handicap. It is possible that there will be racing for 3 fleets from the same start line, and these will be at intervals as shown in the Red Book programme. Sometimes we run 'back-to-back' races: ie there are two races which follow on from each other; the second race is started as soon as convenient after the end of the first.

Where are the racers going? The RO will set a course round racing buoys in the Harbour. The course he sets will be suitable for the racers on the day, taking into account weather conditions and safety. Frequently an adviser from each fleet will suggest a suitable course, but the final decision rests with the RO.

How do the racers know where the course is? The course is communicated by a system of letters on a board. The board is hooked over the outside of the raptackle. There is a Harbour chart and course card set in the red Race Officer's book (in the Race Officer bag) which tells you which letter represents which buoy, and the letters are put on the board to show the sequence in which the buoys have to be rounded. Most Harbour buoys are 'handed' – they can only be rounded in one direction. The buoys in the top part of Bosham Channel are 'unhanded' and the RO will decide in which direction they should be rounded. If the racers are to go to 'port' the red letter should be used, and if they go to 'starboard' the green one should be used. The CDBs have one or two letters which represent their course.

How do the racers know when they should start? The RO gives signals to the competitors. The primary signals are shown by flags, and the secondary signals by sounds. In addition to the Preparatory Flag, each fleet has its own flag and these are hoisted and lowered at appropriate times to indicate the starting sequence for that fleet; each visual signal is accompanied by a sound signal. There are also flags which are used to convey messages other than the starting sequence: for example, if a boat crosses the line early, an "Individual Recall" flag is hoisted; if several boats cross the line early, a "General Recall" flag is hoisted, which indicate that one or all boats must return and either cross the line or restart the race. There is also a "Postponement" flag, often used if there is not enough wind and the start is delayed for that or another reason; a "Buoyancy" flag, which is used to show that the RO recommends that buoyancy aids are worn.

There is a strict procedure for starting races.

- Five minutes before the Start Time, the Class flag is hoisted.
- Four minutes before the Start Time the Preparatory flag ("Blue Peter") is hoisted.
- One minute before the Start Time the Blue Peter is taken down
- On the Start the Class flag comes down.

The flags must go up and come down on time, and fast, so that the primary visual signal is clear. Each of these is accompanied by a sound signal made by the hooter – there's a bell-push button on the side of the raptackle. The clock provided in the RO bag should be used, and does not need to be altered: its purpose is purely to show the time.

As well as the two flags used in the start sequence, you should be ready to hoist an "Individual Recall" or "General Recall" flag if the RO asks. Sometimes (for example if the wind drops during the race) the RO decides that the course is too long so he can "shorten course" by using a flag.

How does the RO know who's racing? BSC uses yellow Signing-on sheets. The sheets are kept on the lectern just inside the door to the Restaurant. Before going on the water every racer signs his class of boat (eg Laser) and sail number, his name and that of his crew (if he has one) on the sheet for his particular fleet. When he has finished racing he 'signs off'. This is a safety measure. If he doesn't finish a race, he should sign off as "Retired". The information from this sheet is transferred onto the Results Sheet. You should also write down the sail numbers of the boats as they prepare for the Start. Please make sure that the signing-on sheet is legible.

Where are the Results sheets? You will find copies of the Results Sheets in the red Race Officer's Handbook which is kept in the RO bag. Usually the blue ones are used for Fast and Slow/Cadet Handicap and CDB, and grey for Scows. We use a separate sheet for each race. The information from the Signing on sheets should be transferred to the Results sheets. It is important that the Signing on sheets are left on the lectern, as some racers miss the first race and want to sign on for the second race, or retire or finish sailing early and must be able to sign off. It's therefore easier to take the Results sheet to the Restaurant to copy the information.

What happens at the start? It can get hectic! Give yourself plenty of time to prepare. This is how it works.

Procedure for starting races.

1. Help the RO to fasten the flags on to the appropriate halyards and set the course cards on the board.
2. Make sure the clock is in place on the table, and help the RO to plan the timing; for example if a race is due to start at 11.00,
 - 10.55 the Class flag goes up
 - 10.54 the Blue Peter goes up
 - 10.59 the Blue Peter comes down
 - 11.00 the Class flag comes down = START

If there's been a postponement to 11.30, the "Postponement flag" will have been flying until the RO decides it's time to begin the Starting sequence. There's always a one-minute gap between the Postponement flag coming down and the beginning of the Start sequence. So

- 11.24 the Postponement flag comes down
- 11.25 the Class flag goes up
- 11.26 the Blue Peter goes up
- 11.29 the Blue Peter comes down
- 11.30 the Class flag comes down = START

It may seem obvious, but it's helpful to write down these timings, as the sequence can get forgotten in the heat of the moment!

3. Write down the sail numbers of the competitors as they're lining up at the start.
4. Keep an eye on the clock and be ready with the flags/hooter.
5. After the start get ready for the next fleet race.
6. Before the racers finish, transfer the sail numbers on the appropriate Results sheet. If you have time to get the info from the Signing on sheets before the racers finish, do so.
7. Make sure you've written the exact start time of the race on the Results sheet for that race.

"I've started, so I'll finish". When you see a boat nearing the Finish line, RO and ARO work together to record the finish time. One signals with the hooter as he crosses the line, and announces the sail number; the other writes down the sail number and the time shown on the clock. It's quicker to write down the sail number and time on a sheet of paper and transfer them onto the Results sheet later.

How do I work out the Results? It depends! Scows (and Tideways in the Sunset races only) are easy. They're all the same. They race "to the same handicap". So the order in which they cross the line gives the final result.

The Fast and Slow/Cadet Handicap fleets and CDBs are different, because there are lots of different classes of boats, so to make it fair we use a Handicap system. For the CDBs you write down the Finish time and give the Results sheet to their Class Captain or representative.

For the Fast and Slow/Cadet Handicaps, each class has a Portsmouth Yardstick Number. You'll find this in the RO Book and in the Red Book on page 42. On the Results sheet you'll find a column headed "H'cap" and you write the relevant number for the Class of boat. Be careful with Lasers: Lasers and Laser Radials have different numbers.

Take the Finish Time and subtract the Start Time to find the Elapsed Time. For example an Albacore which started its race at 11.00 and finished at 12.23.58 will give you an elapsed time of 1 hr 23 mins 58 secs. Now comes the tricky bit. On the calculator you'll find the formula which you use to calculate the results, using the handicap (for the Albacore it's 1068). Follow the formula, entering the time and the relevant PYS Handicap number, and you'll end up with a time which bears little resemblance to the Elapsed Time which you started with. Don't worry, it'll be correct! These Elapsed Times should then be put into order, lowest first to give you the winner, and so on. (NB If you're an ARO at an Event, usually at a Bank Holiday weekend, the RO may be entering results onto a computer program instead of calculating them.)

What do I do with all the Sheets? In the RO bag you'll find a key for the North Room office where the photocopier is. Please make 2 copies of Results and Signing on sheets for each fleet. One set of each goes to the office, in the box outside the Office door. One set of each is pinned on the Noticeboard in the Entrance. The 3rd set of Scow Results/ Signing on sheet goes to the Scow Class Captain or their representative, the 3rd set of Fast Handicap Results/Signing on sheet into the folder on the shelf below the lectern, which is marked "John Fox – Results", and the 3rd set of Slow/Cadet results into the folder on the shelf below the lectern, marked "Slow Handicap & Cadet Results".

Thank you for your perseverance reading this and for your help on the day. It may seem a lot when it's written down, but it's much easier (and more fun) when you're there. And please remember that without you, there wouldn't be any racing!