

North Bay Yacht Club

Race Committee Team Responsibilities

All races at NBYC are conducted under the “The Racing Rules of Sailing for 2009 – 2012” unless modified for Club races by the Race Instructions.

What makes a good race? This is simple:

1. A fair start.
2. Competitors have an opportunity to be rewarded for good sailing and race tactics.
3. A fair finish.

No one person can run a good race or series – it takes a good team to do so. Each member of the Race Committee has an important role to play. In a National or International sailing event, the Race Committee may consist of ten persons plus assistants (see list in Annexure A at end of this presentation).

Obviously, at NBYC we do not have the luxury of ten or more people being available to run organized, fair races. However, a good race or series can still be run well with as few as two or three people who understand what is required. Positions are combined while others, such as the Mark Setter, are not necessary due to the nature of racing using fixed Mark positions.

For most NBYC races, the Race Committee can be distilled into three primary functions:

- **Race Officer** – who serves as Winder Reader, choose the first mark/course number and establishes the Start Line. Also can do other duties such as Sounder.
- **Timer** – who also is the Scorer and Spotter/Recorder.
- **Signaller** (the Flag person) – who may also serve as Line Sighter

As you can see, these are busy people, especially at the starts!

A FAIR START

The ingredients of a fair and safe start are simple:

1. Clear indication of the selected course. The final decision may have to be **made on the water**.

Wind conditions and direction on the water may not be as they appear on land before departing the harbour. The RC will have to make the call as to the direction of the starting leg of the race once on the water. The normal intent is to have the first leg be a direct windward leg if at all possible.

2. Clear visual signals coupled with sound signals. The visual (flag) signals are most important and prevail over sound signals.

3. A start line of sufficient length. The start line should be 1.0 to 1.25 times the length of the longest boat in the race multiplied by the number of boats in the race. In heavy winds, the line length should err on the long side. If you are not sure, go longer, not shorter.

For example: If 10 boats are starting in the “White Sails” division and the longest boat is 30’, then the start line should not be less than $10 \times 30' = 300'$ in length. In heavy winds, lengthen the line to 400 feet or more.

4. Start on time (using discretion for location and wind conditions).

The RC should not wait for tardy boats unless there are specific circumstances (such a poor weather conditions) or if the RC boat itself was late in arriving or had difficulty setting up a fair start line.

5. A start line that is unbiased. This means a fair start is possible from any point along the line.

Of these five ingredients, the 5th seems the hardest to achieve, especially for people without much race or race committee experience. However, it need not be that way – it is really quite simple to achieve.

NBYC Fixed Mark Arrangement

NBYC has six (6) fixed Marks at locations around the circumference of Callander Bay plus a start mark in the approximate centre of the Bay. With an average 60 degree spread between marks, these Marks should provide for the needed upwind starting leg for any combination or configuration of race course decided for a given night. The upwind (windward) first leg determines which Mark will be sailed to first and, as a consequence, course number will be chosen.

Selecting the first leg

It is unusual for the RC to be able to determine which Mark will be sailed to first while on dry land at the Skipper’s Meeting. The final decision on which Mark will become the 1st windward Mark (and thereby establish the course number for any particular race) must normally be made on the water. Apparent wind direction on land may be totally different than what is experienced on the water.

The RC boat should always be on the starboard (right) end of the start line.

Working with a Fixed Start Mark

NBYC works with a “fixed” start mark rather than a movable start mark. This creates its own challenges for setting a fair start line that is unbiased to either side of the course.

Under “perfect” conditions, the wind will be blowing directly from one of the six numbered course Marks and directly toward the start mark position in the middle of the Bay (i.e. directly along the rhumb-line. The rhumb-line is the shortest distance between marks. In the case of the first leg, it is the distance between the start mark and the first windward mark.

However, we know that “perfect” conditions seldom exist, so the NBYC Race Committee must, on each occasion, exercise judgement in setting the start line. It is better to be set at exactly 90 degrees (square) to the wind direction and be approximately 90 degrees to the rhumb-line of the course for the first leg. Being 90 degrees to the wind will help ensure that competitors won’t jam up the RC boat end or the pin end of the start line. Although an unbiased start line (i.e. no advantage on one end or the other) is harder to achieve with a fixed start mark, a good start line should have and will, ideally, allow boats to start more toward the middle of the line, allowing the RC boat a better view of the start. (Note: If all the boats have jammed up at the RC boat, or if you have a number of boats starting on a port tack, you have NOT set the line at 90 degrees (square) to the wind or there is a huge bias obvious to those racing).

When, on occasion, you find that the wind is oscillating back and forth and it is hard to know exactly where the wind is coming from, the RC should attempt to determine an average wind direction and set at 90 degrees to the average.

Once you have the course selected, and the Start Line is set, all there is left to do is get the race underway. Once the RC has sounded the warning signal, the course and start-line cannot be changed unless the race is abandoned or postponed. If there is a significant change in the wind direction between the time the warning signal has sounded and the start of the race, the race should be postponed and the start line reset.

Note about starts made from one of the fixed marks other than the centre, fixed start mark – the same approach as described above will apply, but there will be less choices as to the first mark and first leg direction relative to the wind. To keep it simple, the same 90 degree rule should apply although the rhumb line may be further away from the wind.

Hint for squaring up the line by moving the RC boat – Since, when working with a fixed start mark, you cannot move the pin end, you must be able to adjust the relative position of the RC boat. You accomplish this by having a sure anchour and an extra long anchour line. By paying in, or paying out, the line you will be able to bring your RC boat forward or back to “square” the line.

Starting Sequence

The modified starting sequence, normally used at NBYC for the Tuesday night and other races (unless advised otherwise), is as follows:

6:20 YELLOW Flag and Horn 10 minute warning for non-Flying Sails
6: 25 BLUE Flag and Horn 5 minute warning for non-Flying Sails. Yellow Flag lowered
6:29 Blue flag lowered
6: 30 RED Flag and Horn START SIGNAL YELLOW Flag 10 minute warning for Flying Sails
6:35 BLUE Flag and Horn 5 minute warning for Flying Sails. Yellow Flag lowered
6:39 Blue Flag Lowered
6:40 RED Flag and Horn START SIGNAL

The flags are critical. Flags prevail over the horn or any other sound signal so it is critical that the Race Committee get the flags up and down on time and in perfect sequence.

WHILE THE RACE IS UNDERWAY

Although the bulk of the RC's work takes place prior to the start, at the start and then at the finish, the RC must still stay engaged in the progress of the race, taking note of elapsed time, making decision about course shortening or course changes that may be necessary, establishing or adapting the finish line to suit.

In addition, the RC should take note of boats that abandon the race, collisions or other protest situation if they are, or are made, aware of those.

A FAIR FINISH

There are four situations which normally occur in race finishes at NBYC:

1. Race finishes at the same location as the start (the Start line also serves as the Finish line)
2. Race finishes at a predetermined Mark or location different from the Start.
3. Race is shortened and finish line is set up at the next Mark from where the lead boat is positioned.
4. Race is shortened and a finish mark is placed.

It is critical that in the case of 3. and 4. that all competitors are given the opportunity, through visual signals and in combination with sound signals, of such change in course or shortening of the course.

A finish line does not need to be the same length as a start line. Normally, a finish line that is 5 to 6 times the length of the longest boat in the race is sufficient for a fair finish. The finish line should be set up perpendicular (90 degrees) to the line of the last leg of the race (i.e. the "Rhumb line" or the most direct line from the last mark rounded). Competitors can decide for themselves which end would be the favoured end.

NOTE: A boat is considered finished when any part of the boat in its normal position (including sails, spars, crew in normal sailing position) crosses the vertical plane formed by the "invisible" finish line. That is when the horn is sounded to indicate a finish and the time recorded as such. Under the rules of sailing, the entire boat need not completely cross the line to finish to be considered finished. A boat which crosses the line with any part and then dips back to the race side of the line is considered finished even if they did not wholly cross the line unless, for some reason, they interfered with another competitor or contacted the RC boat or the finish mark and must do their 360 or 720 penalty turns to exonerate themselves.

For more information, refer the Race Instructions and **"The Racing Rules of Sailing 2009 – 2012"**.

Annexure A -Race Committee

In a National or International sailing event, the Race Committee may consist of ten persons plus assistants
Positions include:

- **Race Officer (RO)** – the person in charge and makes major race decisions.
- **Timer** – the “heartbeat” of the committee, tracks time and calls time sequences aloud.
- **Signaller** – signals information to competitors through visual signals (flags).
- **Sounder** – in charge of sound signals (horn, whistle, etc) to draw competitor attention to visual signals.
- **Line Sighter** – sights start line to ensure proper starts, sights finish line to determine order of finish.
- **Scorer** – tabulates finishing times and positions, calculates scores, posts results.
- **Spotter/Recorder** – identifies and records all boats starting, finishing or not completing a race.
- **Winder Reader** – observes and records wind direction at regular intervals.
- **Mark Setter** – positions, sets and relocates Marks of the course. Assists wind reader with information.
- **Committee Boat Operator** – responsible for operating and equipping the Race Committee boat.