

COMMUNICATION

The game is being improved by making more information available to all involved in the competition process.

Utilizing radio communication we can provide more information and some entertaining data for all interested parties.

Sailing Instructions and the use of sounds and flags are the traditional method of communication with competitors on the race course.

The radio is used exclusively to communicate with support boats and to support the safety plan.

Most communication between the race officer and race committee is by VHF marine band radio, however cell phones are also used for more sensitive information.

Though most of the information broadcast is in the form of directions to the race committee, there is also a lot of information being sent that is of direct interest to the competitors, coaches, jury, spectators, etc.

Since it is impossible to prohibit listening to these messages, we began using them in a positive manner keeping in mind that anything said on the radio does not change a rule.

Race officers of this day are quite familiar with standardized practice used around the globe. They are comfortable with their procedures and have no qualms about the general public hearing what they are instructing the race committee to do.

This was not always the case. Things started to change in the 90's where International Race Officers were becoming more involved with many partners in presenting international racing.

Measurers, judges, organizing authorities, coaches, media, sponsors, and the sailors themselves now have an indirect involvement with the process.

The tendency was to start providing more information to all involved via the radio. The downside was the possibility that competitors would interpret this information to be rules when in actuality it only reflected procedure instructions from the race officer to his team.

There is no problem with all of the competitors hearing what the wind conditions are at the various marks at any given time, nor that we may be anticipating a shift in the strength or direction of the wind and will likely move the marks to maintain the course configuration.

There is nothing in any of this that might tend to prejudice a competitor.

If all of them have radios and thus access to the information.

So we come to a key point. If you are going to broadcast pertinent information to competitors on the radio, you must have informed them in the NOR.

The NOR advises them that radios will be used, so bring one.

The SI will advise them to what extent the radio may be used by the competitor.

In essence it tells them that they can monitor the working channel, but cannot broadcast on it with the exception of an emergency or notification of retirement.

This restriction will also apply to other groups like spectators, coaches, etc.

The Jury will often have their own channel, but often monitor and contact RC on the working channel.

We have found that one of the most beneficial aspects of open mike race management is the effect it has on the starting line.

During the start sequence many race officers broadcast what they are observing to the pin boat.

It is very obvious that competitors are listening to the broadcast and are adjusting their position as a result.

The end result is there are very few OCS, and those that do occur are quickly corrected.

We started broadcasting this type of information in 2002 during the Pre-Olympic regatta in Athens, Greece. The first time we did this, I was reprimanded by a member of the International Jury.

Fortunately at debrief later that day, the Jury Chairman applauded the practice and we kept it as an informal procedure on all courses for the remainder of the event.

Olympic classes do not carry radios and so were not exposed to these broadcasts however, most others with a radio were listening including Jury, team leaders, coaches, media, spectators, and 'on shore officials'.

The response we got encouraged us to start providing more general interest information.

Later when doing keel boat events where all of the boats had radios, we would add into the Sailing Instructions the RC Channel number with the recommendation that all monitor the channel during the final minute of the start sequence.

Aside from the obvious valid information about the start line, there is a ton of other information, regarding conditions on the course, shipping, storm cells, obstructions, safety issues, etc.

We are adding yet more information. It is now common to start the day with an announcement to the fleet welcoming them to the venue, the racing. verifying the start time, the course, with weather and current conditions and any thing unusual like shipping, obstructions, etc.

If moving, an announcement about the L flag and that the racing area is moving to X location and sailing will commence in X minutes is another example of user friendly communications.

The idea is to keep all involved with the process and informed about what is going on and what is about to happen.

As far as spectators, it gives them a new dimension in that they can now hear what is happening as well as observe it.

Certainly it also provides the ability to follow the actions of the officials as well as competitors.

The confident race officer is comfortable with this exposure.

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