



**Middle Harbour Amateur Sailing Club**

**The Laser Club**

# **Race Management Guide**

Revised November 2017

# Race Management Guide

## Introduction

MHASC has no permanent Race Committee and race management is provided by club members on a rostered basis.

The enjoyment of racing is to a large extent dependant on the quality of race management.

This Race Management Guide has been prepared for members to help improve the quality of race management at MHASC.

**The Race Management Guide, Sailing Instructions, Race Officer Duty List and the Emergency Plan form a 'MHASC Sailing' package that you need to review before your RO duty. They are all on the MHASC website under 'Racing'.**

Our Racing is governed by the Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS), the Special Regulations of Yachting Australia (YA), and the rules and by-laws of the International Laser Class Association (ILCA)

At the end of your rostered day it is suggested you review your performance, seek feedback and learn from any mistakes while receiving praise from your fellow competitors for a job well done!

## Safety

The RO's primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of all competitors.

The RO will be responsible for administering the Emergency Plan in the event of an emergency on the water. A copy of the Emergency Plan is on the Club website.

Whether racing can be conducted safely is ultimately a judgement for the RO, but in reaching that decision the RO should be guided by the following:

- Racing should not start or continue when the wind strength is gusting over 25 knots on a sustained basis as indicated on Seabreeze or similar.
- Racing should not start or continue in poor visibility, that is when the Club boat on Start station cannot clearly see all the marks.
- Racing should be abandoned when a major weather event, such as thunderstorms, is in prospect and the competitors sent home.
- In stronger wind conditions courses should as far as possible be set inside Middle Harbour and the course area minimised (using multi-lap courses as necessary).
- The RO should be in a position to render assistance to any boat in trouble (This does not necessarily mean that a start, or finish, has to be delayed to provide a tow to a boat with a broken spar). It may also make sense to tie a boat with broken gear to the committee boat or simply anchor it and take the skipper on board to enable the race to be completed.
- The start boat is licensed to carry a maximum of 4 people
- All safety equipment – life jackets, first aid kit, bailer and waterproof torch are stored under the driver's seat of the start boat.

The duty crew should always be conscious of their own safety. This includes wearing PFDs whenever alone or if the sustained wind strength exceeds 15 knots.

The RO must also ensure that the boat is not driven at a speed above 10 knots unless driven by the holder of a Boat Licence.

## Sailing Instructions

**No matter how experienced, you should read the club's Sailing Instructions before leaving to setup the course.** These are to be found in the Red Clip Board in the Race Officer's bag.

Also review the meaning of visual and sound signals as shown on the back pages of

RRS.

Their use is briefly recorded on each flag.

The SI's are the prime document which governs how the races should be conducted and you should not make up your own variations on the spot.

The SI's of course are part of the Racing Rules of Sailing and it is a good idea to take your copy of the RRS with you onto the race course as well as the Sailing Instructions.

### **If You Observe a Breach of the Rules**

Sailing is essentially a self regulating sport. Your job is to run a good race. It should be left to competitors to resolve a breach of the rules.

### **Check List Of Equipment to be Taken Afloat**

The starting boat should be fuelled and loaded, ready to go before the briefing is called. Before leaving the club conduct the following checks to ensure the listed equipment is on board:

1. Ground tackle and anchor for boat
2. Four rounding marks (for Short Race Series, two rounding marks plus a distance mark) and the pin end start/finish mark
3. Ground tackle and anchors for all marks, line weights (several links of chain) and a spare anchor.
4. Safety equipment - Buoyancy vests, First Aid Kit, Bailer, Waterproof torch
5. Tow ropes
6. Flags:
  - Red and Green (to indicate course direction for figure of eight course and possible change of course) Note: an Orange flag is not referred to in the SI's and should not be used
  - Numeral Pennant 3 (on normal race days, to signal extra lap, at RO's discretion )
  - Numeral Pennants 1, 2 and 3 (Short Race Series only)
  - Class Flags for Standard and Radial/4.7 rigs (Warning signals).
  - Preparatory Flags: P and Black
  - Answering Pennant (AP, Postponement)
  - 1st Substitute (General recall)
  - X (Individual recall)
  - N (Abandonment)
  - A (When used with AP or N means GO HOME)
  - C (Change of course)
  - S (Shorten course)
  - L (Come along side - I wish to communicate with you)
  - K (Windward Return Course)
7. Race Officer's bag containing
  - Sailing Instructions
  - Red clip board and pencil
  - Finishing Sheets
  - For handicap starts only, handicap numerals – large A4 numbers (0 - 15)
  - Hand bearing compass
  - Horn and/or whistle
  - Wind Indicator (not supplied)
  - Watch – use your racing watch set to Standard Time (EST or EDT)
  - Tape recorder for starts and finishes, Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS, optional but can be handy!)
8. Mobile Phone and VHF radio

### **Check Operation of Horn**

Before competitors arrive at the starting area, check the horn is working!

If in doubt about the horn there are air horns on the boat with a pump or use a whistle. If neither horns nor whistle is available then use your loud voice. Competitors should time

their start from visual signals. The sound draws attention to the visual signal.

## Laying the Course

1. **Give yourself plenty of time.** You should aim to start the first race at the designated time.
2. The key to a good course and a good starting line is to spend some time determining the mean wind direction so that the windward leg is directly into the wind and the starting line is at right angles to the wind. Set the course for the current mean wind direction and NOT for what you think it might do (it seldom does!). It is always best to use a compass to lay the course and the start line.
3. If the wind is trending, or otherwise unstable, delay setting the course until it stabilises, but don't seek perfection! Sailors would rather have a race than wait for the race officer to set a perfect course. After you have decided on the wind bearing for your course, it is helpful to pick a point on the shore to windward and to leeward to help you when driving the committee boat to the points where you will drop the marks.
4. **Lay the top mark.** Keep the top mark well clear of the shore – particularly in a southerly. Use plenty of line to ensure the mark does not drag and always use the line weights to ensure the excess line is dragged below the surface. While you are at the mark, take a compass sitting of  $\pm 120^\circ$  to the wind direction to guide you to a position for mark 2 for a figure of eight course.
5. **Lay the marks for the reaching legs.** After laying mark 2, take another bearing to mark 3 and the same again for mark 4. The optimum reaching angle is  $120^\circ$ . Again keep marks clear of wind shadows.
6. **Recheck the wind direction** near the proposed location of the leeward mark (mark 4 for normal racing). **Lay the leeward mark directly downwind of the windward mark.**
7. **Lay the starting line.** It is recommended the length of the starting line should be about: no. of starters x 3 metres  
Drop the pin end buoy first. Drive the boat at right angles to the wind until you are happy with the line length. Then drive well to windward before dropping the start boat anchor to give enough room to adjust the angle of the line and to make sure the anchor holds. When the boat settles, use your compass to **ensure the line is at right angles to the mean wind direction**. In a very light breeze with tide against wind it may be necessary to use the outboard in reverse to hold the boat on station or use a very short anchor line. Pick a transit point on the shore to make sure neither you nor the pin are drifting.
8. Whatever the conditions it is important to **watch competitors in the last minute** and if there is likely to be a General Recall as a result of excessive crowding at one end, then AP early and re-set the line.
9. **Never feel pressured into starting at the scheduled starting time** with a poor line or if the breeze is too light or unstable but, again, don't seek perfection.
10. If the **start is likely to be late**, hoist AP with two sound signals, preferably at the scheduled start time. The starting sequence must commence one minute after AP is lowered with one sound signal.
11. Start the second race as soon as possible after the first race has finished. It is best to keep using EST or EDT on your watch (rather than using an arbitrary stop watch) so competitors know when to expect the next sound signal – all signals should be made when the seconds display reads zero. This also helps the recording of finishing times as required for ALL handicap races (even if a handicap start).
12. Decide whether you want an extra windward/leeward to increase the course time to give a race of about 50 minutes duration. If so, display Numeral Pennant 3.
13. If you expect a long delay you should hoist AP with two sound signals after the finish of the first race. At the beginning of the starting sequence for the second race, lower with one sound signal.
14. The **starting line cannot be altered** after the Preparatory Signal.
15. Flags must be displayed and lowered with **precision**. Keep the new flag below the gunnel of the boat and display it with a quick lift. Stagger the height of the flags when hoisted so all flags can be seen from any angle. The Preparatory flag should be closest to the port side of the boat so it is clearly visible from the start line
16. Before a start, if you are uncertain about the quality of the breeze, or any other matter, use flag L to **consult with senior sailors**. They are usually recognisable by the amount of talking they do and they are invariably happy to provide advice!

17. For Short Race Series, the above also applies except that the course should be set for a 12 to 20 minute race, with a three minute starting sequence – but don't forget to signal the number of laps to be sailed.

**Allocation of Tasks During Starting Sequence**

Work this out with your crew before the first start. Normally it is up to the RO to call the start and speak into the tape recorder. The assistant should count down the time loudly and drop the warning flag and make the sound signal. Always write down the time sequence for each start, especially the warning signal time and the start time. Keep the pen and paper handy to record any numbers of premature starters. Have the AP, individual and general recall flags ready BEFORE the start sequence is started.

**Which Preparatory Flag Should be Used?**

**Best to use the P Flag for the first start. Don't use the Black Flag if the General Recalls have been due to a poor line.** The black flag imposes certain obligations on the starter and make sure you are aware of them (check the Sailing Instructions – if you have a general recall after a Black Flag you need to attempt to notify the guilty parties by hail before the next start).

**Bail Out Early**

During the last minute before the start (or earlier), if it becomes apparent that

- the line is too short or too biased, (in some instances the line may be perfect for the conditions but the competitors perceive that one end is favoured), or
- there has been an error in the starting sequence,

then cut your losses early and save time by displaying AP with two sounds before the start. The new starting sequence should be started by hoisting the new warning signal one minute after AP is lowered with one sound signal.

**At the Start:**

At the start, you have to immediately decide whether it is a clear start, General Recall or Individual Recall.

1. The line must be sighted from the boat's console to the windward side of the pin end buoy.
2. In most starts you will know your call five seconds before the start or earlier.

**Individual Recall (Flag X)**

1. You don't have to identify **all** OCS starters but it is best if you do. If there are too many unidentified, go for a General recall.
2. The X flag should be displayed (with one sound) no later than say 4 seconds after the start. If nearby and you can advise all that are over, you can yell out their numbers.
3. The flag should remain displayed until all OCS competitors have returned to the pre-start side of the starting line or its extensions .
4. If any OCS competitors don't return, X should remain displayed for four minutes or one minute before the next warning signal, which ever is shorter. No sound signal is required when it is lowered.
5. When it is apparent that OCS starters are unlikely to return, then remove X and one minute later go into the next sequence.

**General Recall (Flag 1st Sub)**

1. It should be possible in club races to avoid a General Recall by setting a good starting line and by competitors knowing the RO will not accept early starters (using Individual Recalls helps create that discipline). If you do have a General Recall quickly reset the line (if necessary) and re-start as soon as you can.
2. If a number of boats are over before the start in the last minute and cannot or are unlikely to return, and you cannot get their numbers, then AP before the start.
3. If a General Recall is used it should be displayed (two sound signals) within say 10 seconds of the start.
4. Ensure the poor start was not a result of a poor line. ie. too short or too biased. If it was then correct it.
5. Up to the start, you may use AP for any error in the starting sequence at any time and that is better than thinking the competitors will ignore your error.

6. If there is a starting stuff-up that is uncovered **after the start**, then use N with three sound signals. The next sequence should start one minute after N is lowered with one sound signal.
7. Restart the next starting sequence as soon as possible.

### Shortened Course

1. During racing, monitor the race elapsed time and be prepared to shorten the race at any mark to ensure the race time is not much more than an hour. If the wind dies to nothing before the first boat reaches the first mark, consider abandoning the race.
2. When shortening course, anchor the boat so that competitors will pass through the finishing line (between boat and mark) as part of their normal mark rounding.
3. Signal shortened course by displaying flag S with two sound signals as the first boat approaches.
4. Finish the race in the normal way as described below.

### Change of Course

RRS (Rule 33) provides for a change to the course after the start (Flag C and a series of sounds). This may be a change to the direction of the next leg, its length or both. This change should be indicated to all competitors at the mark which commences the changed course. With one committee boat at MHASC this may not be possible. You may use your judgement to instead notify a change of course by informing all boats on the water

### At the Finish

If there is a race to follow, save time by ensuring the line is long enough and at the right angle to be used for the next start. The finish line for the second race can be set further to windward than where the start line was to achieve a target time of about 50 minutes. The length of the finishing line can be shorter than the starting line and again you should aim to set it at right angles to the local wind.

### Allocation of Tasks During Finishing

#### RO

1. Call sail number of each finisher, generally in advance to give time to write down the numbers. Call “xxxx finishing NOW” as the boat finishes.
2. If a whole lot are finishing at once it can be helpful to just call the last four digits of the sail number.
3. **Use the tape recorder to help ensure no confusion in the finishing order and to help confirm finish times.**
4. Acknowledge the applause and gratitude from competitors.

#### Deputy RO

- Using the Finishing Sheet provided and using separate columns for Standard and Radial rigs, record
1. The start time (best EST or EDT)
  2. The sail numbers of all finishers including OCS and Black Flag starters in the sequence of finishing
  3. **The finishing time (hour, minutes and seconds) of each competitor (best EST or EDT). (The Handicapper requires the time difference between each finisher.)**
  4. The sail number of any visitors.
  5. Do **NOT** record times for short race series races.

### Further Assistance

A Race Management Manual may be viewed on the ISAF web site at [http://www.sailing.org/raceofficials/internationalraceofficer/document\\_library.php](http://www.sailing.org/raceofficials/internationalraceofficer/document_library.php).

### Caveat

MHASC acknowledges that it may be sometime before you are able to reach the level of competence suggested in these guidelines. Indeed, if you are able to execute your duties in accordance with these guidelines you are probably good enough to be an National Race Officer. All that we ask is that you do your best.

**Other**

There may be times (such as so you can finish a race or rescue someone else) where it makes sense to take on board the skipper of a Laser and anchor the abandoned Laser or tie it to a mooring. In such a case you should tie a ribbon of red and white danger tape to the bow of the boat so that other rescue boats are aware the skipper is safe. If the boat is capsized tie between the rudder and centreboard. A roll of danger tape is kept in the boat.