IN HOT PURSUIT
RETHINKING COURSE OPTIONS
Introductions

Bruce Bingman – National Race Officer & Chair US Sailing PHRF Committee; PRO Blue Circle, STC Block Island Race Week and PRO Annapolis to Newport Race

Chris Museler – YRA Representative, Long Island, PRO The Archipelago Rally

Nathan Titcomb – Offshore Director, US Sailing

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The Old Days
Fast Forward 100 Years!
No More Windward-Leeward!

• Racing participation is dropping in almost every venue – except:
  • Casual Wednesday nights around Government buoys
  • Pursuit racing catering to newcomers and cruisers
  • Non-traditional Windward-Leeward courses
  • Point to Point destination racing

• Looking around the boatyards there are an increasing number of “Performance Cruisers” replacing traditional racing boats

• Sailors are telling us with their feet what they want!
Course Options Beyond Windward-Leeward

• Drop Mark Options
  • Modified Olympic
  • Harry “A”

• Government Mark Options
  • Closed Course
  • Open Course
  • “Random” Race

• Point to Point
Starting Options

- Pursuit Starts
- “Le Mans” Starts
- Rally Races
- Downwind or Reaching Starts
- Conventional Starts
Let’s Talk About Some of These Options

• Modified Olympic and Harry “A” Courses
  • Offer reaching legs
  • More passing lanes for handicap boats
  • Still requires mark boats and skill in setting course
  • Popular with racers and “serious” cruisers - not so good for the novice or first time sailors
Government Mark Options

• Easy to run – typically need only a committee boat
• Start and finish same place (Closed Course)
• Start in open water and finish at ? (Club, Party Site, Cruising Destination, Etc.)
• Offers all points of sail - May have “offwind” start
• May require some “blue water” navigation
• Popular with cruisers and casual racers
• “Random” race has fixed start/finish and gives a list of buoys to round – racers pick their own course!
Government Mark Options (Cont.)

• A few things to remember:
  • Government marks are used to mark channels – be aware of regulations in your area about commercial traffic and “clear lanes”
  • May need USCG permit to run
  • Should provide verbiage in SI’s to remain well clear of commercial traffic
Point to Point Options

• “Destination” races have been very successful
• Typically big party at the finish
• Have proven to be popular with both racers and cruisers
• Some of the biggest races in the country with hundreds of participants:
  • FIGAWI
  • Chesapeake Bay Governor’s Cup
  • Delta Ditch Run
Starting Options

• Pursuit Start
  • Boats wait until their handicap is expired, then start – thus slower boats start first, faster boats last
  • Reduces or eliminates the stress of starting with many other competitors and complexity of start rules
  • Very popular with cruisers and sailors new to racing
  • Small boats love being in the “clear” and love to see the big guys behind – running aground, etc. - big boats love to pass little boats
  • Keeps it fun for all
Starting Options (Cont.)

• “Le Mans” start
  - Boats are anchored with all sails down behind start line
  - All crew below – or a variant, crews aboard, skippers on shore and must row dinghy to boat after start signal
  - Popular with cruisers but best for smaller fleets

• Downwind or reaching start
  - May be only option for Point to Point Race
  - Must be careful to “bias” line to prevent “pile up” at one end or the other
  - Good for “Pursuit” start – cruisers like!
Starting Options (Cont.)

• Rally Race
  • Boats sail to a predetermined time for the race. The boat closest to the predetermined time wins.
  • Set times based on time median boat will sail the preset course (use experience, US Sailing Velocity predictions or Designer’s prediction). Adjust all other boat times relative to median boat using PHRF handicaps and race distance. Add 20% to each time and allow 5 minutes of engine time.
  • Start boats off at 30 second or one minute intervals, slowest first.
  • Great fun to see boats stalling or motor sailing flat out at finish to try to hit exact time!
How do you set up a pursuit race?

• Several of the available scoring programs offer pursuit race options that will pre-calculate start times
• Set up your own spreadsheet
• Can do in Time on Time but much easier in Time on Distance scoring
• Use the “TIME” function in Excel with all references in hh, mm, ss functions to calculate start times
• Expression for start time is:
  First Start + (TIME(0,0,(reference rating – competitor rating)) x Distance)
Mixed Format Races

• Mix distance races with buoy/drop mark races in multi-day events
• Use the same starting line for both distance and drop mark races
• Allow for drops or “lay days”, particularly in cruising classes
Have Fun!

• The key to participation is to put the “fun factor” back into racing
• New or varied formats
• Emphasize sailing and destination, not who gets there first
• Great parties
• Increased Comraderie
SUCCESSES!

• Block Island Race Week, the NYYC Annual Regatta and the STC Fall Chesapeake Regatta have used mixed format very successfully with 2 to 4 days of buoy racing plus a distance buoy or “around the island race”

• In 2013 and 2015, the Performance Cruiser classes at Block Island Race Week ran from the same start as the traditional W-L classes but only used the windward drop mark as their first mark and sailed a Government buoy course around Block Island Sound after that. This year, based on competitor feedback, the “Navigator” races at BIRW used pursuit starts with “Lay Day” and met with high praise from the competitors. One race days allow time for beach going or sightseeing!
SUCCESES (cont.)

• The last two Annapolis to Newport races featured a “Performance Cruising” class – which is becoming the largest class and was split into two subclasses this year.

• The FIGWI is the “granddaddy” of all pursuit racing and typically has nearly 300 entries.

• The HOT Rum Race in San Diego mixes Pursuit start, tricky tides and the overall mantra of “have fun racing and make friends afterwards” into the most successful race on the West Coast.
Let’s look at a successful alternative format race in detail:

The Archipelago Rally
The Archipelago Rally

*Evolution-Format-Execution*
"Took their Handicap at the beginning for the start."

Early 1900s:
AUSSIE 18 Foot Skiffs
Addictive Work in Progress
Collaborative versus Competitive

“Come as you are and we’ll fit you in.”
HOW it works!

- No entry fee
- Volunteered food
- E-vite
- Portsmouth Yardstick modified
- Adventure and Team Work
RALLY RECIPE
Design for success

- 1.5-hour race or less for slowest boats
- LOTS of time to rig
- Reachy Course
- Add time to ralliers who crush the fleet
- Make PARTY longer than RACE
Social Responsibility

“Use your Platform to Help others and Raise Awareness.”
RALLY ON!

NOTE: All images from 2017 Archipelago Rally at Wickford YC by Rufus Van Gruissen
LET’S GO SAILING!
ANNAPOLIS – NEWPORT START
Downwind Point to- Point start
Leaving the Great Salt Pond at Block Island
Your Opinion Matters

Please open the Sailing Leadership Forum app and complete the session survey found in the menu bar for a chance to win a free drink ticket!

Thank you for attending this session