

XOD Centenary - Cowes Week 2011 Newsletter

Most of you will know that we held an urgent meeting of the Class Committee on Tuesday 21st June. The splendid news that, as at the date of the meeting, we had succeeded in attracting 140 boats to Cowes Week had produced a mixture of reactions and many genuine concerns about whether it was safe or sensible to start as a single fleet. To some it represented the once-in-a-lifetime (and welcome) prospect of unprecedented numbers on our start. To others it offered nothing more than the (unwelcome) certainty of chaotic starts, inevitable damage and indifferent racing. So the choice we had to address was whether to start as a single fleet (making such adjustments to our ordinary procedures as appeared necessary) or split the fleet in one of the many ways in which that would be possible.

This issue attracted a great deal of discussion and many suggestions, most of which were helpful and constructive even though opinions varied dramatically. In advance of the meeting, I asked the Divisional Captains to canvass the opinion of those members of their divisions who had entered Cowes Week. They did so and we were therefore able to take our decision as a Committee that felt able to assess where the majority opinion lay: that is, not simply by a majority of the Divisions but by reference to the size of the entry within each Division.

It was clear that there is a majority in favour of single fleet starts, albeit there is a substantial minority in favour of splitting the fleet. In the light of the fact that Stuart Quarrie, CEO of CWL (who was good enough to attend our meeting), felt able to start us in that way if that was our wish as a Class, that is the decision we have taken. Single starts as one fleet it will be.

But all entrants must be crystal clear as to the following.

1. Although we are going to have a much longer line than usual, it will inevitably be very crowded. Success in getting the fleet away (and preserving any kind of harmonious and satisfactory racing) will depend very substantially on *everyone* being prepared to demonstrate good seamanship and good sense (that is, Give and Take).
2. The first three days racing are *likely* to be started from a Committee Boat(s).
3. If there is chaos or catastrophe, it is possible that the arrangements for the rest of the week (that is, single or multiple starts) *might* have to be reviewed.
4. Everyone will have to recognise that, whatever may have been (or become) their personal preferences, what we have decided represents the wishes of the majority of the Class. None of us on the Class Committee (including your correspondent in particular) wishes to be burdened with yet further ear-bending from those who disagree with that decision. We know it will be imperfect racing. It will certainly be exciting. It may be fun or it may not. But it is what most of you/us want. It is down to all competitors to make it work.
5. To (try and) make it workable, those over the line will automatically suffer a 5% penalty and will not have the option of returning to start correctly. Those caught taking advantage of this provision by stealing a deliberate march on the fleet on the basis that a good start is a greater benefit than a 5% penalty can be reasonably confident that they will be disqualified.

6. There are various other special provisions/instructions that we will be issuing before Cowes Week. They will appear in the XOD Sailing Instructions and as an aide-memoir which will be drafted by Peter Taylor and Neil Payne and issued well before the Regatta starts.
7. We shall race for the Captain's Cup in the usual way

I should mention three other points.

First, make sure you have made arrangements to have your mainsail roundels fitted before you go to Cowes (preferably) or otherwise at Cowes before the first race starts. If in doubt, speak to your Divisional Captain.

Second, it is more important than ever this year that people do *not* muck around with their Cowes moorings by deciding they can improve their position by sneaking on to someone else's which seems more appealing. Stay with the one with which you started the week. Nurture it. Return to it every day and bid it a fond farewell at the end of what will, we hope, have been a good week. Remember, it is really irritating when someone parks on your mooring and, if it does happen, we shall send the boys round.

Third, we have decided, for this year only, that we shall not have team racing on the Friday. We felt we have more than enough with which to occupy ourselves for the rest of the week.

With best wishes to you all, and the sincere hope that we all remember to cherish our beautiful boats and not treat them as floating dodgems.

William Norris – Class Captain – June 23rd 2011.