

**A GUIDE FOR HOSTING WOMEN'S MATCH RACING EVENTS**  
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Organizing a match racing event is much like organizing any other regatta your club may have run in the past. Of primary importance is finding a regatta chair who is willing to oversee multiple committees. This includes everything from choosing a date, publicizing the event, registration, race committee management, social activities, housing and transportation options available for participants, and establishing a budget. What this guide will point out is the additional considerations to make in hosting a women's match race event.

**Sailboat Needs and Considerations**

*Type Boat*- The event should be held in a small keelboat, ideally 18-25' in length. The minimum number of crew is three and suggested maximum is five. Spinnaker boats are preferred, although not essential. Popular boats fitting this description include the J-22, Sonar, Yngling, J- 24 (restricted to 100% jib), and Ideal 18. However, in other parts of the world, a wide range of other keelboats are used. Whatever class is chosen, remember that class rules should not apply to the racing.

*Number of Boats* - A minimum of 4 boats is necessary to run the event. Having 12 boats on a single course with a single race committee is considered the maximum. In addition to boats used for a match, there should always be one or two spare boats available. This allows for a replacement boat should a breakdown occur. During the event, these spare boats should be kept anchored near the race course or on a dock ready for immediate use.

*Equalizing Boats* - Of prime importance is the equalization of boats in pairs. If boats are not equal, matches become lopsided. Three main issues should be considered. This includes rig tuning, deck layout and equipment, and sails.

*Tuning* - Equalize the boats just prior to the event. Have one person or a small committee tune all rigs identically. Then tape or tie the shrouds in position so they cannot be changed by competitors. Note the forecast and set boats up for all expected wind conditions.

*Deck Layout and Equipment* - Ideally, all the boats used will be similar in deck layout and equipment. If this is not possible, pairs of boats need to be as identical as possible. To match boats, look at their age, upkeep, the way deck hardware has been laid out (including the position of the mainsheet cleat), and equipment on board. Pay particular attention to windexes and compasses. Windexes should either be on all the masts or none of them. Compasses are not necessary. If only some boats have them, they should be covered. Additionally, all personal equipment should be removed. It is recommended that a Coast Guard approved life jacket be aboard for every crew member, as well as a functional bucket and any class necessary safety gear.

*Sails* - The best case scenario is to have an entire fleet of sails made solely for the event. However, since that is not always practical or possible, try

to match sails as closely as possible. Again, pairs of sails should be matched noting not only sail age, but brand of sailmaker so they have similar shapes. If spinnakers being used on all the boats are of similar vintage and make, consider assigning each crew one spinnaker for the entire event so they are responsible for its condition throughout. Do not concern yourself with numbering or lettering on sails.

Hull Needs - Since competitors will rotate boats, and for easy identification, hulls need to be numbered. Call your local sailmaker and ask for bow stickers or cut out numbers, one for each side of the hull of each boat. Numbers should be large enough to be read clearly from a distance and placed in the front two feet of the bow.

Spare Parts - Throughout the event, expect small parts to break. It will be essential to have a maintenance boat and person on hand at all times for on-the-water and after racing repairs. A kit containing tools, small blocks, electrical and duct tape, lubricant spray, line, battens, cleats, winch parts, etc. is essential for access to keeping the fleet in working condition throughout the event. A spare spinnaker pole and set of sails should also be available.

### Powerboat Needs and Considerations

Types - Umpire boats need to be small boats equipped with outboard engines and steering wheels. They should provide unobstructed visibility from all sides of the boat while driving and as passenger. They should be easily maneuverable and in good working condition. Ideal umpire boats include Boston Whalers, Hard Bottom Inflatables, or any boat which is used for coaching purposes. The ideal size is 15' to 22'. Center console with hand rails on the console so the umpires can stand, a 4 stroke engine and room for storage of umpire gear. For race committee purposes, either a power or sail boat may be used. Staffs or halyards need to be available to fly various starting flags. In addition, there should be at least one mark set boat and a repair boat on the water. Unless you're sailing near a dock, one of these boats may need to be used as a rotation boat. That boat must be either an inflatable or have ample fenders.

Quantity - The number of umpire boats available must equal one-half ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) the number of boats racing in the matches. So, if there are 8 sailboats available for match racing, there must be 4 umpire boats plus 1 wing boat, if possible. Additionally, a spare boat should be available in case there is engine failure.

### Umpire Needs

To determine your umpiring needs, first determine the number of boats that will be sailing in your event. The number of umpires needed is the same number. So, if your event has 10 sailboats, you will need 10 umpires. Ideally, all the umpires will be certified. Attached to this package is a list of certified umpires by state. To arrange umpires for your event, you should begin contacting those closest to your area. If you cannot arrange enough certified umpires, then you may also have non-certified umpires. Ideally these are

people who are either certified judges or are avid racers who are familiar with the current racing rules. The number of non-certified umpires cannot exceed the number of those certified. During the event, non certified umpires should be paired with certified ones. Two umpires are needed to man each boat. The umpire call book and more specific information can be found at [www.sailing.org](http://www.sailing.org) (see Resources section at end of this document.)

### **Suggested Rotation and Format**

If your fleet is evenly matched, crews will ideally stay in the same boat for either an entire day or half the day of racing. If your fleet is uneven, it will be necessary to rotate boats after each match. The format of the event can be done in several ways. Listed below are the two most common formats used for racing.

*Double Round Robin* - Each crew should race against each other for one full round. This means that if there are 8 teams, then after the first round, each crew will have raced seven times. A good goal, under ideal wind conditions, is to complete 7-9 races in a single day. To do a double round robin, the same rotation is completed a second time, with competitors switching ends of entry. It is best to at least partially complete the double round robin rather than not attempt any of it if weather conditions are unfavorable.

*Single Round Robin and Following Eliminations* - Begin by scheduling a single round robin where each crew races the others once. Following that, the top four teams should be scheduled for the semi- finals, with the winner of the single round robin choosing their opponent in the semi- finals. The two unchosen teams race each other. The semis should be the first to win 2 matches, or if you have time, the first to win 3 matches. The winners of the two semi- final heats then compete in the finals for first and second place, which, ideally, should be the first to score 3 points. The losers of the semi-finals compete in the petit-finals for third and fourth where the winner is the first to score 2 points. This assures that the Finals finish after the petit-finals. A consolation round can take place for the rest of the competitors at this time if desired. However, often they are invited to ride on the umpire boats for observation.

The courses used for match racing are always variations on windward-leeward courses. Marks are rounded to starboard and finishes are always downwind usually through the original starting line. The course is usually set with both the windward and leeward marks upwind of the starting line so matches in progress don't interfere with subsequent starts. The best course is windward- leeward twice around with the finish being on the second run. However, if very light weather persists, one windward- leeward is a good option. Three times around on this course is rather rare but can be listed as an alternative as well, especially in a small or confined area. The windward leg should take just 5-8 minutes to complete one time.

## Equipment List

Besides the mentioned spare parts, match racing requires other special flags available for each competitor, umpire pair and race committee. This includes the following items:

For Competitors - Each crew should be issued the following flags with their registration packet: 1 solid blue flag (port entry), 1 solid yellow flag (starboard entry), 1 solid red flag (protests other than right of way rules, requests for redress, etc.), 1 solid green flag (breakdown), 1 Code Flag Y mounted on a two foot dowel stick (for protesting another boat). Flags should be 8"-12" in length and width.

For Each Umpire Boat - Each pair of umpires should have the following flags: 2 solid blue flags mounted on a three foot dowel stick, 2 solid yellow flags attached to a three foot dowel stick, one solid red flag attached to a three foot dowel stick, a green and white flag attached to a three foot dowel, and one solid black flag attached to a three foot dowel stick. Flags should be 16" - 24" in length and width. The yellow and blue flags are used for indicating penalties assessed to competitors and are displayed in a PVC pipe mounted on the console.

For the Race Committee - Besides standard committee flags, a solid blue and solid yellow flag attached to a three foot dowel stick is necessary to indicate boats over early and finishing. Consult the current rule book to make sure all other starting and procedural flags are on board. Among the flags needed include numeral pennants to indicate which match is starting. A complete list can be found at [www.sailing.org](http://www.sailing.org) under match race, "suggested umpire and race committee equipment."

## Entry Fees and Expenses to Competitors and Regatta Host

Entry Fees - Traditionally, women's match racing events have limited entry fees. However, sailors do realize that nominal fees may need to be paid in order to have events. Normally a bond fee is paid by skippers as an acceptance for regatta entry. This figure varies for every regatta, depending on insurance coverage at the event and usually acts as a damage deposit during the event. If damage occurs, the skipper at fault must replenish the bond fee in order to continue racing. At the end of event, if there has been no damage, the bond is normally refunded. Additionally, entrants usually expect to pay for borrowed boat insurance. Member National Authorities (MNAs) (such as US SAILING in the U.S.) has policies available to yacht clubs with set insurance fees. On top of these fees, a nominal racing/social fee can be charged. Although providing lunches for competitors is "nice," don't consider it a necessity. Plan to have one informal dinner and for a small informal awards ceremony at the minimum. Remember, if entry fees get too high, competitors will not attend.

Host Expenses - In addition to the traditional expenses associated with hosting a regatta, match racing brings other expenses for a host club to consider. First would be those associated with equalizing and maintaining boats. Second, if budget permits, offer transportation and food expenses to

umpires. The event cannot take place without the umpires, who already volunteer their time for the regatta duration. Covering their expenses is a nice way to thank them. Also, finding housing for the umpires, and if possible, the competitors, is traditional.

### **Associated Clinics for Competitors and Umpires**

In order to enable more women to become confident and skilled in match racing, developmental clinics are necessary for teaching basic skills and allowing practice in racing situations. Equally important is broadening the umpire base in the U.S. Clinics allow those interested in becoming certified umpires the opportunity to get their feet wet in less critical moments. If possible, schedule a clinic with your regatta. It should be scheduled for one to two days and held just prior to your event. To run the competitor's clinic, an officer from Women's International Match Racing Association ([www.wimra.org](http://www.wimra.org)) can help identify a clinic leader. This person may or may not charge travel and clinic fees. The clinic leader will need access to a classroom, coach boat, and associated teaching tools. The leader will outline the clinic objectives and format. For support, the leader will typically need a race committee and some umpires available during part of the clinic time. To run an umpire clinic, contact ISAF (Umpire's Committee) to help determine the needs.

If grant or sponsorship money for clinics can be found, that is the ideal situation. Again, contact WIMRA for help in this area. If funding is not possible, assess participants appropriate fees to cover clinic costs.

### **Getting Your Match Race Event Started**

A few things need to be done to establish and publicize your event. First, establish feasibility of running the event. If your club can accommodate the special needs as listed above, then a date should be chosen. The regatta should be 2-5 days in duration.

Once a time frame is established, complete an application to have your event "graded" or considered official by the International Sailing Federation (ISAF). You can find an application on the ISAF web site ([www.sailing.org/matchracing.php](http://www.sailing.org/matchracing.php)), download, complete, and submit it. You should apply through ISAF for a Grade 4 or Grade 3 status. Having your event graded will also help attract publicity and sponsorship for the event, and will ensure that competitors attend. If the event is not graded, teams do not earn ranking points.

The regatta will attract sailors from all around the country (or even outside the country). Hence it is important to advertise it not only locally, but nationally. Your target audience should be all women sailors who reside in your region. Have the event posted on a variety of internet sites such as WIMRA ([www.wimra.org](http://www.wimra.org)), ISAF ([www.sailing.org](http://www.sailing.org)), your MNA site (such as US SAILING in the U.S. ([www.ussailing.org](http://www.ussailing.org))), and the collegiate sailing site ([www.collegesailing.org](http://www.collegesailing.org)). You will also want to post event details on your own clubs' web site or one designed specifically for this event.

Along with a Notice of Race, an application must be developed for potential participants. Since there will be limited space for entrants to your event, the application will be used to determine the invitation list. Set an application deadline that is at least two months before your event. In order to determine whom to invite, rank the applications received. While it is important to rank the most experienced match racing sailors high, don't overlook a sailor who has never match raced yet has extensive other sailing experiences. It is recommended that at least 50% of those on the first invitation list be women who are currently ranked by ISAF. This list is available on the ISAF web site. However, be sure not to exclude low or non-ranked competitors from your first invitation list. You may also accept competitors on a first-come first-served basis, as long as this is clear in your publicity. It is not ideal, however.

Early in the planning stages, it is also necessary to contact your MNA (such as US SAILING) directly. You will need to obtain information from them on borrowed boat insurance, advertising limitations, and with general publicity. They may also have ideas on securing umpires and clinic money.

While organizing a women's match race regatta can be a big undertaking, the naming of a successful event can be extremely rewarding. Being in the developmental years of this sport, your club can be established as part of the Olympic circuit for women's match racing.

#### Resources:

- *The Racing Rules of Sailing*
  - available through ISAF ([www.sailing.org](http://www.sailing.org)) or your national authority
  - <http://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/RRS2005-2008-%5B502%5D.pdf>
- ISAF Call Book for Match Racing
  - available from ISAF: <http://www.sailing.org/matchracing.php>
  - <http://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/mrcallbook2007-%5B913%5D.pdf>
- ISAF Umpires and Match Racing Manual
  - available from ISAF: <http://www.sailing.org/matchracing.php>
  - [http://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/iu\\_manual\\_6\\_2005-%5B923%5D.pdf](http://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/iu_manual_6_2005-%5B923%5D.pdf)
- ISAF Match Racing Information Centre:
  - (<http://www.sailing.org/matchracing.php>)
- Women's International Match Racing Association:
  - ([www.wimra.org](http://www.wimra.org))