

Technical Committee Chairman's Report to the AGM

2006 has not yet proved to be controversial from a Measurement point of view. It has, however, been a year of some interesting discussions.

In the spring we introduced self measurement of masts by the Mast Manufacturers. This appears to be working satisfactorily, partly because of the limited number of manufacturers.

As Rupert has mentioned, there have been 6 Dragons sunk during the year of which 3 are known to have been recovered. There has been concern that the Class Rules are not adequate in this respect, in particular 2.191 which requires yachts built or measured after 1st March 2000 to have positive buoyancy of 1700 litres. This is the absolute minimum amount of buoyancy to keep a boat afloat without a crew. The Technical Committee following a test believe that 2500 litres would be a better requirement since it recognises the crew weight and would give a greater safety margin. We therefore propose to advise builders that we will be changing the rule with effect from 1st March 2008, subject to any recommendations and comments they may make.

Many of you may know that I was one of the crew on board GBR681 Kraken when she sank in the Solent during the Edinburgh Cup and whilst she floated for some five minutes lying head to wind it was not until we put up a flare that our fellow competitors realised we were in difficulties. I would encourage you all to carry flares which incidentally are a British Dragon Association requirement for its UK regattas. Also I would recommend that the bucket is carried in a readily accessible place, not stowed up by the mast. I am also concerned that some yachts are racing without the forward hatch and the drainage bungs in the bulkheads being in position. If these are not in position, the yacht is racing without effective buoyancy in contravention of the rules.

We deal with these years' recommended Rule Changes per se under Item 9 of the Agenda, but for the record I would like to comment on the three significant ones;

Corrector Weights
Total Mast weight
Shroud Adjustment

Corrector Weights

The idea behind this change is allow the older boats which will put on weight to reduce it more easily thereby helping them to remain competitive. By removing correctors from only around station 8 will not effect the weight distribution in the boat and therefore the necessity to re-swing the boat is eliminated.

Total Mast Weight

This will enable checks to be made in the field without the need to strip the mast.

Shroud Adjustment

This is a controversial issue which was raised and rejected in 2004. The Officers remain concerned that rig adjustment during racing is still occurring in the racing fleets despite constant reminders that it is not allowed under the Class Rules. It is a rule which, unless turnbuckles are sealed before a race and inspected afterwards, is virtually impossible to police, and it is now felt necessary to bring back this recommended rule change to prevent dishonest sailors having an advantage. It does however; also mean that the better sailors will have more opportunity to optimise their mast adjustments whilst sailing to the disadvantage of the less skilled. It should be noted that the fore and aft position of the shrouds shall be fixed at deck level, hence the use of the word 'horizontally' Under ISAF rule, fixed means requiring a tool to adjust/remove and therefore adjustable shroud deck plates located with a screw, removable or adjustable by hand, are prohibited.

Measurement

I am pleased to report that following a visit to St Petersburg, Russia by Gunter Ahlers we have appointed a Measurer in Russia.

Finally, on the 17th and 18th of November we are holding a Measurer's Seminar in Burnham on Crouch by kind permission of Petticrows and the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club in order to ensure that there is consistency among the Measurers.

2006 Class Rule Changes

Having presented his report, he then went on to present this year's Rule Change proposals and asked that changes to CRs 1.65, 2.15, 2.504, 6.103, 6.104, 6.110, 6.112, 9.32, and 11.10.4, since they were clarifying existing wording or recognising current practice should be voted together. He also asked that proposed changes to CRs 4.40 and 4.50 should be withdrawn and this was also agreed. The proposed changes were then voted and approved with the required 2/3rds majority.

The proposed Rule Change regarding changes to rig tension whilst racing had been summarised in his Report, but further comment from the delegates was invited before a

vote was taken. There was some opinion that because it could not be policed was not sufficient reason to relax it, and also had the Class fully explored methods of sealing the shrouds and inspecting them before and after a race. It was pointed out that whilst this might be practical for a series, it would not be on a day-to-day basis, and since there were an increasing number of Regattas where 2 races per day were being sailed in varying wind conditions competitors should be allowed to vary their rigs between races which would further make the 'sealing' option impractical. Others felt that adjusting tensions whilst racing was a recognition that the Class was continually developing, and that allowing the relaxation was one more step in being able to further control the rig and the boats performance in a range of wind conditions. The Chairman pointed out that mechanisms allowing fore and aft movement of shrouds at deck level were, and would remain, prohibited. At the subsequent vote the proposed Rule Change was approved by the required 2/3rd majority.

The Chairman also advised the Meeting of the proposal the Class had put to the ISAF Annual General Meeting to allow Classes sailing under the Category an Advertising Code to be able to provide 2 sponsors with suitable advertising space on competing boats by allowing both bow stickers **and** booms or backstays to be used.

Following Mike Hayles' comments on buoyancy and accompanying safety aspects, he asked the delegates for their thoughts on whether VHF should be allowed for emergencies only by the Class. After some discussion it was thought that Sailing Instructions should carry an emergency number for

the Race Committee (afloat) to be used for the reporting of emergencies during a Race. (also to be added to the Regatta Regulations).

The Chairman also asked for views on the provision of GPS tracking devices to boats taking part in certain events. This had been achieved during these years Danish Championships and the general feeling was that, apart from some small technical problems, it was an excellent method of enhancing spectator and supporter interest as each individual track could be monitored during racing, and retrieved later for the information of the competitors themselves. It was felt that certain delays should be built into the system to prevent the possibility 'real time' information being communicated to the Fleet and support boats. Generally the meeting agreed that the possibility should be pursued for some of the larger Regattas and Mini Jaatinen agreed to try to have transmitters provided at the Europeans tune –up Regatta.