

Wilson Harbor Yacht Racing Association  
Thursday Evening Races  
Competitor's Handbook  
*Revised May 6, 2009*

## **INTRODUCTION**

This handbook provides a brief description of the procedures used by WHYRA in running races. In most cases, these are the standard procedures as described in the Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS). Places where WHYRA differs from the RRS will be noted here and can also be found in the Sailing Instructions (SI). If you are new to racing, please take a few minutes to read over this handbook—this will make your racing more enjoyable and safer for everyone.

## **THE RACING RULES OF SAILING**

The RRS is the most important document that governs sailboat racing. You should own a copy and carry it on board when racing. You can obtain an official copy inexpensively direct from US Sailing at [www.ussailing.org](http://www.ussailing.org). There are also many annotated versions available through most bookstores.

Inside the back cover of the RRS are illustrations of the flags used as race signals. You will need to know these or have them available for reference. Many racers purchase a sticker for the cockpit with the flags and their meanings (available from any marine store or from US Sailing). WHYRA has also posted a copy of the flags and their meanings on the web site ([www.whyra.org](http://www.whyra.org)).

The RRS contains both the rules that govern boats while racing and the procedural rules for running races. This handbook will deal exclusively with the latter—the procedures for running races. An introduction to the rules that govern boats while racing is available on the WHYRA web site.

While reading this handbook, you should also have a copy of the WHYRA course diagrams and the WHYRA SI for reference (both available on the WHYRA web site).

## **HANDICAP SYSTEM**

In an attempt to account for differences between various types of boats, WHYRA uses a handicapping system. The handicapping system that we use is the Performance Handicap Racing Fleet-Lake Ontario (PHRF-LO). This is a system used to handicap racer/cruiser types of sailboats based on observed performance. Under this system, a given boat's handicap is based on certain deviations from an unmodified “standard” boat of the same type. The “standard” boat has been assigned a speed potential (SP) number based on its

observed performance over the years. On Lake Ontario, a “standard” boat is basically an unmodified sloop with a 150% genoa, a 180% spinnaker, a standard size spinnaker or whisker pole, a folding prop on an inboard, or a retracting motor on an outboard powered boat. Deviations from the “standard” boat (for example, oversized jib, non-folding prop, etc.) are applied to come up with an assigned speed potential (ASP) for an individual boat. This ASP, in seconds per mile, is used to correct each boat's elapsed time for a race. Note that no attempt is made to account for the racing ability of the crew, the material or condition of the sails, the condition of the bottom, or the amount of extra cruising gear, fuel or water that you carry onboard.

## **THE WHYRA RACING SEASON**

In WHYRA racing, boats are divided into classes, based on their PHRF-LO handicap and their use of a spinnaker. There are Main & Jib (White Sail) classes for boats who do not use a spinnaker. WHYRA usually has two or three Main & Jib classes. There are Spinnaker classes for all boats that fly a spinnaker. WHYRA usually has one spinnaker class. Although all WHYRA boats race together, you are only competing against the other boats in your class. Class divisions are posted on the WHYRA web site. Note that the Spinnaker classes may sail a different course from the M & Jib classes

The WHYRA season consists of Thursday night races throughout the summer. The schedule is in the SI and on the web site. Races are divided into groups called series. WHYRA usually has two or three series. Prizes are awarded for the winning boats of each class for each series and for the season overall.

## **ARRIVING AT THE START AREA**

The start area for WHYRA races is slightly north-east of the Wilson Harbor piers. It is marked by a fixed buoy, labeled P on the course diagrams.

WHYRA starts for Thursday races are always at approximately 7:00pm (1900). It is best to get to the start area as early as possible. This allows you time to get used to the weather conditions and to get your boat ready for racing. The race committee (R/C) boat will usually arrive about 30 minutes before the start. When the R/C arrives, they will anchor their boat and post the course to be sailed. The course is indicated by painted boards. These boards have different letters and numbers on each side—the side facing the P buoy is the one you should read. Use the course diagrams to determine the order for rounding the racing marks, the bearing to the first mark, and the side of your boat the marks should be on when you round them.

It is a good idea to “check in” with the R/C to make sure that they have seen your sail number.

## STARTING

The start line is the imaginary line between the P buoy and the R/C's mast. You always start in the direction toward the first mark. Two starts are used. The first is for all spinnaker boats, the second for all white sail (main & jib) boats.

The R/C will make the following sequence of signals to begin a race:

WHYRA Starting Sequence  
Example times are for a 7:00pm first start time (ST)

<i>Nominal Time</i>	<i>Example Time</i>	<i>Signal</i>	<i>Flag and Sound</i>	<i>Minutes before start</i>
ST-5 min.	6:55pm	WARNING	RED flag raised, 1 sound	5
ST-4 min.	6:56pm	PREPARATORY	BLUE flag raised, 1 sound	4
ST-1 min.	6:59pm	One minute	BLUE flag removed, 1 long sound	1
ST	7:00pm	SPINNAKER FLEET START	RED flag removed, 1 sound	0
ST+1 min.	7:01pm	WARNING	WHITE flag raised, 1 sound	5
ST+2 min.	7:02pm	PREPARATORY	BLUE flag raised, 1 sound	4
ST+5 min.	7:05pm	One minute	BLUE flag removed, 1 long sound	1
ST+6 min.	7:06pm	WHITE SAIL FLEET START	WHITE flag removed, 1 sound	0

One trick is to use the flags as your timing signals, not the sounds (if you are any distance from the R/C boat, the sound will take time to reach you). The R/C may also broadcast the countdown on VHF Channel 68.

Boats are considered to be racing from the time their preparatory flag is raised. The Racing Rules state that boats not racing shall not interfere with boats that are racing. This means that white sail boats must keep clear of spinnaker boats until the white sail preparatory flag is raised.

Once the start signal is made, you are free to cross the starting line. If any part of your boat is over the start line at the start signal you must get completely back over the start line and start again (see Recalls, below).

## RECALLS

If any boat is over the line at the start, the R/C will raise the **X flag (blue cross on a white field)** together with **one sound signal**. The R/C may attempt to hail the boat(s) that were over. If you think you were over (or are hailed), you must get completely back over the start line and start again. You do not have to “go around the ends” (go around the starting pin or committee boat).

If many boats were over the line at the start, or some mistake was made during the starting sequence, the R/C will raise the **First Substitute flag (yellow triangle on blue field)** and make **two sound signals**. All boats must then return to the start area and wait for the R/C to begin a new starting sequence (which will occur 1 minute after the First Substitute is lowered).

## POSTPONEMENTS AND ABANDONMENTS

If there is some reason that a race cannot start on time (light or variable wind, for example), the R/C will signal a postponement by raising the **AP flag (red and white vertical stripes)** and making **two sound signals**. You should wait in the start area for further information. Postponements can only be made before a race is started.

If racing cannot occur (thunderstorms or fog, for example), the R/C will signal abandonment by raising the **N flag (blue and white checkerboard)** and making **three sound signals**. Once a race is abandoned, it will not be restarted. *[Note the RRS do allow for a restart in some circumstances.]* Abandonment can occur at any time, even after a race has started.

Postponement or abandonment signals may be made from on shore near the TYC gas dock.

Races are automatically abandoned if a mark is missing and the R/C does not know about it before the start, or if the time limits expire (the time limits can be found in the SI).

## SHORTENING THE COURSE

The R/C may elect to shorten a course (if the wind dies, for example). If the course is shortened, the R/C will raise the **S flag (blue square on a white field)** and make **two sound signals** as the first boat from each class approaches. Finish the race by crossing the line between the S flag and the P buoy in the direction of the course from the last mark you rounded.

## **FINISHING AND SCORING**

The finish line is the imaginary line between the P buoy and the yellow flag on or the mast of the R/C boat (or the S flag, for a shortened course). For WHYRA racing, this is generally the same as the start line. You finish when any part of your boat crosses the finish line in the direction of the course from the last mark. Once you finish, you should promptly get clear of the finish area and other boats.

Your finishing time will be noted by the R/C. After the race, the WHYRA scorer will correct the time based on your handicap. Your finish place will be determined by that corrected time. For each class, the winning boat receives 1 point, the second place boat 2 points, etc. Scores are usually posted on the WHYRA web site within a few days of the race. See the Scoring section of the SI for information on how series and season championships are calculated.

## **CONCLUSION**

Many WHYRA racers gather at a local restaurant after racing to relax and hear the race results. Please join us for this post-race tradition. Please also feel very free to ask any questions of the WHYRA committee members or any fellow WHYRA racers.

We hope that this handbook will increase your enjoyment of racing and we look forward to many seasons of WHYRA racing!