

Racing 101

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There's just something about this sport that makes a lot of us try to go just a little faster, jibe just a little better and beat the other guy or gal to wherever we're going, even if we aren't going anywhere in particular. Makes us feel good. And, it doesn't seem to make much difference how old you are either. I know of 50, 60 and even 70 year old windsurfers who still get a kick out of getting there first.

The first sailboarding races we know about were held in March of 1941 when ten fixed-mast sailing surfboards competed off Hawaii's famous Waikiki Beach. The Outrigger Canoe Club donated the trophies and the Honolulu Star-Bulletin featured the story in its sports section. Also in 1941, stand-up sailsurfing competitions were reportedly held in Palm Beach, Florida with film of the events stored at the Kennedy Library at Harvard University. Unfortunately, World War II seems to have interfered with the sport's growth for the next 20 years or so. In 1962, Hoyle Schweitzer and Jim Drake developed their freesail sailboarding system and windsurfing began to grow into the sport we all know and love today.

🚩 Motivation to Race

Of all the windsurfers in America today, probably only about 5% actively compete. If you asked them why, a lot of them would probably tell you they compete because they want to win and have fun. The rest would probably tell you they compete because they want to have fun and to win. My guess is the more serious racers put wanting to win first while the less competitive put wanting to have fun first, although I

suppose it's entirely possible that winning is really the most fun for both groups!

🚩 Sanctioning of Races

All major sports have organizing authorities that are responsible for accrediting competition. In America, the National Organizing Authority for our sport is the United States Windsurfing Association. Our main objective is to assure that all competitive events within our jurisdiction are fun, safe and fair for all. Together with the International Yacht Racing Union and United States Sailing Association, the USWA provides guidance to Local Organizing Authorities like the windsurfing club or association in your area. This guidance is in the form of the USWA Event Guidelines and the Scoring Systems Handbook. You can also order the 275 page Gaastra Hawaii Race Manual which contains everything you could possibly need to know about planning, setting up, conducting, scoring and competing in windsurfing events.

🚩 Where Do I Start?

There are several categories and levels of events and it's important that novice racers enter an event appropriate to their skill levels. If you think you're as good or better than most of your friends who already race, you might feel comfortable starting with a USWA Points Regatta or Direct Qualifier. Otherwise, you're probably better off starting with a USWA Fun or Recognized Event. The important thing is that you try to enter events that are USWA Recognized or Sanctioned. That way you know the event meets important criteria for fun, safety and fairness.

🚣 Which Fleet, Class and Division?

Here are a few definitions you may want to know. A Fleet refers to a group of people who race together, like people who like to race on dissimilar equipment (Open Fleet), or people who like to race on identical equipment (One-Design Fleet), or people who are less competitive and like to race on shorter courses (Sport Fleet). A Class refers to the equipment you race on, like anything goes (Unlimited), or production equipment (Production Class or Limited Production Class) or Mistral IMCO boards (IMCO Class). Finally, a Division refers to your sex, age and weight within your Fleet and Class.

So, if you'd like to race just for fun on production equipment, look for an event with a Sport Fleet and Production or Limited Production Class. If you have equipment that qualifies as One-Design and you'd like to race with other people in your Class, look for a One-Design event or an event with a One-Design Fleet or Class. If your main interest is qualifying for the USWA National Championships, look for an event that is a USWA Direct Qualifier or Points Regatta Series. If you have any questions, call the LOA (their phone number is always listed on the Notice of Race) and ask! You'll find race organizers are usually very friendly and helpful and will go out of their way to answer all your questions and make you feel welcome.

In a large event, you usually have some choice as to the Fleet and Class you enter. In a small event, you may not have any options as everyone may have to compete in the Open Fleet/Unlimited Class. In USWA Points Regattas and Direct Qualifiers, you don't have a choice when it comes to Divisions as you must be registered in your own age or weight Division. If your LOA uses Fleet by Class Competition Format, then you compete with everyone in your Fleet and Class but receive recognition and awards by your age or weight Division. On the other hand, if your LOA uses Fleet/Class by Division Competition Format (like it might for Slalom

Racing), then you compete with and are scored and recognized by your own Division or with the Open (All Age) Division. If there aren't enough of you to form a Division (usually six competitors), the Race Director will combine your Division with another Division or two.

🚣 Discards or Throw-Outs

Discarding refers to the practice of throwing out your worst score, or two or three worst scores. Most racers, including novices, usually like discards since they make racing more fun and compensate for bad luck and equipment failure. Top-runners who do consistently well sometimes don't like discarding since it can actually work against them. At any rate, most racers agree discarding is great and they like USWA's recommended 1 discard per 4 races, 2/7 and 3/11.

🚣 Scoring

USWA recommends the Low Point/Reverse Scoring Systems. In Low Point Scoring, your finishing place is your score except for First Place which is 0.7 instead of 1.0 (which helps avoid ties). Reverse Scoring assigns the Event winner a point value equal to the number of registered competitors in the Fleet or Division. In addition to the basic Low Point/Reverse Scoring Systems, there are a couple of special ones. One is called Relative Scoring. It figures Fleet ranking, awards Fleet Points, then sorts the field by Fleet/Class by Division for recognition and awards. The other is called Conversion Scoring, which converts Fleet or Fleet by Class scores into Division scores and awards Division Points for recognition and awards. All of these are straight-line systems that accurately rank racers according to their skill level.

⚡ Penalty Scores

Sometimes you might see some strange letter combinations next to one of your scores. These notations explain why your finishing place has the value of NRACERS+1 (number of racers plus one) for Course Racing and its variations including Long Distance, or LAST (last possible finishing place) for Slalom Racing. The letters DNC stand for Did Not Compete (you never even entered the race); PMS, Pre-Mature Start (you crossed the start line early); DNS, Did Not Start (you entered the race but for some reason didn't start); DNF, Did Not Finish (you entered the race and started but for some reason didn't finish); RET, Retired (you entered and started but for some reason you decided to quit racing); DSQ, DiSQualified (you did something, that disqualified you from the race, like missing a mark); and DND, Do Not Discard (you did something, like violated another racer's right-of-way and didn't perform the Alternative Penalty and thus couldn't throw out the score). In USWA Events, all penalty scores carry the same value within the discipline, either NRACERS+1 or LAST.

⚡ Tie Breaking

USWA's recommended scoring systems are exact and accurate. Your score total is the sum of your finishing positions. Ties for First Place are uncommon (due to the tie-breaking value of .25 or .3) but ties for other places are fairly common. USWA recommends ties be broken in favor of the racer who:

1. Beat the other the most number of times they competed together
2. Has the greater number of 1sts, 2nds, 3rds and so on.
3. If the tie still remains, it shall stand as the final result, except:
 - a. when using the Fleet or Fleet by Class Competition format in combination with the

Conversion Scoring System, the third rule shall be that the tie be broken in favor of the competitor who has the higher Fleet Points.

- b. for International, National and Direct Qualifier Events, the third rule may be that the tie is broken in favor of the competitor who beat the other the last time they competed together.
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⚡ Starting the Race

Races are started with flags and sometimes horns. The White flag means Warning! 6 minutes (or 3 or 2) to start. The Blue flag means Prepare! 3 minutes (or 1) to start! The Red flag means Start! Check the notice board for the time sequence for the flags. A tapered Red and White striped flag means postponement. Watch for the White flag one minute after it goes down. A White flag with Blue Cross means someone was over early.

⚡ Right-of-Way Rules

If you're the kind of person that likes to know everything, get yourself a copy of IYRU's International Yacht Racing Rules as adopted by US SAILING. Then order Dave Perry's Understanding the International Yacht Racing Rules. You'll need it to understand the IYRR!

Actually, you really don't need to know everything to race safely and avoid DSQs! Remember, racing rules are based on common sense and allow everyone to enjoy racing without running into each other on the water. If you live by the Ignorance is Bliss rule, you may have fun but you'll spoil the fun of others and compromise safety and fairness.

⚡ Course Racing (and variations including Long Distance)

1. Try to avoid contact with other boards.
2. If you're not racing, don't interfere with those

who are.

3. If you acquire right of way, give the other board room and time to keep clear.
4. If you re on opposite tacks, the starboard board has right of way. The port tack board shall keep clear.
5. If you re on the same tack and:
 - a. not overlapped, the board clear ahead has right of way and the board clear astern shall keep clear.
 - b. overlapped, the leeward board has right of way. The windward board shall keep clear.
6. If you re the leeward board or the board clear ahead, and you decide to change course, give the other board time to keep clear.

🚩 Slalom racing

Definitions: the Right-of-Way line is an imaginary line through the bow of the board at 90 to the line between the two course marks that bound the leg on which you re sailing. The inside of your sailboard is the side on which you II leave the next course mark. The outside is your other side. You're overtaking from the time you establish an overlap until, if your overtaking on the outside, you re clear ahead; or when overtaking on the inside, your right-of-way line is ahead of the right-of-way line of the overtaken board.

1. Same as Rules 1-3 above.
2. When surf conditions exist
 - 🟡 If you re going out, you have right of way. A board coming in shall keep clear.
 - 🟡 If you re neither going out nor coming in and you re the starboard tack board, you have right of way. A port tack board shall keep clear.
3. In non-surf conditions, if you re the starboard

tack board, you have right of way. A port-tack board shall keep clear.

4. Except when gybing around a mark, a board that is either tacking or gybing shall keep clear of a sailboard on a tack.
5. If you re overtaking:

🟡 On the inside, keep clear until your right of way line is ahead of the right of way line of the overtaken board.

🟡 On the outside, keep clear until you re clear ahead.

🚩 Race Etiquette

Remember, most novice racers compete primarily for fun! So keep relaxed and have a lot of fun! That way, even if you lose, you II still have fun. If you happen to win, you II have the most fun of all. Win or lose, you II learn more in an hour or two of racing than a month or two of recreational sailing!

If you happen to violate someone s right-of-way, just apologize, do a 720 and keep on racing. If another racer loses their cool over something you do, don t take it personally! Being yelled at doesn't mean you necessarily did anything wrong, but if you know you did, just do a 720 and keep on racing.

Yelling at the Race Committee is really uncool. After all, they work hard to make fun for you, so the least you can do is to accept their authority. Later on, you can always talk to them about the problem over a cup of coffee. Finally, learn to laugh at your mistakes and lose with a smile! Whatever you do, avoid cursing and throwing a tantrum and don t take racing too seriously! Non-racing windsurfers might think racing is no fun at all!

■ Awards Ceremony

If the Event in which you are entered has an Awards Ceremony, be there, even if you didn't win! It's a great time to talk about the event and to learn from the experts. Sometimes door prizes are given out and the only way you can take home one of those is to be there! Remember, it's fun to win but it's more helpful to lose IF you can learn from your mistakes.