



WSC Night Captain Guidelines

Table of Contents

Overview

The Race Committee

Before Racing

The Week Before:

- ▶ Review Guidelines
- ▶ Contact RC Members

On Race Day:

- ▶ RC Assignments
- ▶ Boat Check-Out
- ▶ Setting the Course
- ▶ Setting the Starting Line
- ▶ Signals to Racers

During Racing

The Start

- ▶ Starting Sequence & Signals
- ▶ Recalls
- ▶ Postponement

The Race

- ▶ Commercial Traffic
- ▶ Rescue Operations
- ▶ Restricted Starting Line

When Conditions Change

- ▶ Moving Marks
- ▶ Shortening Course
- ▶ Abandoning

The Finish

- ▶ The Finish Line
- ▶ Recording Finishers

After Racing

- ▶ Sweeping the Course
- ▶ Boat Check-in
- ▶ Protests
- ▶ Scoring

Overview

The responsibility of the Race Committee is to conduct races that are **fun, fair**, and **safe** for the participants. The job of the Night Captain is to organize and direct all operations of the Race Committee. You are the person in charge!

In order to make racing **fun, fair**, and **safe**, you must make sure that:

- Racing begins on time, and subsequent races are started promptly after finishing (target: 3-5 races for Lasers, 2-4 races for other fleets, depending on wind conditions).
- Courses and lines are set square to the wind direction.
- Course length results in races of approx. 15 minutes (a bit less OK for Lasers, a bit more OK for fleets). The more races the better!
- Courses and instructions are clearly communicated to the fleets.
- Starting procedures and signals are clear, correct and accurate (including recalls!).
- Finishes are clearly and accurately recorded.
- Commercial traffic is guided safely around the racing fleets.
- Boats or crews that become disabled are rescued and returned safely to shore.
- A protest committee is assigned to hear any protests lodged.
- Races are postponed or abandoned when warranted by adverse weather conditions.

The Race Committee

Race Committee at WSC requires at least 4, and preferably 5, members, including the Night Captain, the Safety Boat Captain, and 2-3 assistants. Race Committee operations require two boats*:

Committee Boat requires a crew of at least 2 (preferably 3) and is responsible for

- selecting courses
- communicating instructions to the fleets
- starting
- finishing (on all M courses)
- directing the actions of the Safety Boat

Safety Boat requires a crew of at least 1 (preferably 2) and is responsible for

- setting, moving, and retrieving marks
- rescuing boats in distress
- leading commercial traffic through the course
- finishing (on W, T, and O courses)

* On windy nights, it's wise to have two safety boats on the course if possible!

Equipment Checklist

Committee Boat (WSC 2)

- ▶ Course board & course placards (W, T, O, M, 2)
- ▶ Timer (3-minute countdown)
- ▶ Horn or whistle
- ▶ Loud hailer
- ▶ Finish order worksheets
- ▶ Pen or pencil
- ▶ Signal Flags
 -  Orange flag (start line)
 -  Blue flag (finish line)
 -  Class flags (one for each class racing)
 -  P (Prep flag)
 -  X (Individual Recall)
 -  First Substitute (General Recall)
 -  AP (Postpone)
 -  N (Abandon)
 -  L (Come within Hail)
 -  R (Starting Line Restricted)

Safety Boat (WSC 1)

- ▶ Marks
 - 3 orange (turning marks)
 - 1 yellow (starting mark)
 - 1 red (optional finish mark)
- ▶ Anchors/anchor lines
 - 5 (at least 1 for each mark)
- ▶ Towline (at least 20' long)
- ▶ Horn or whistle
- ▶ Finish order worksheets
- ▶ Pen or pencil
- ▶ Loud hailer
- ▶ Signal Flags
 -  Blue flag (finish line)
 -  N (Abandon)
 -  L (Come within Hail)
 -  S (Shorten Course)

Before Racing

The Week before Race Day:

▶ Review guidelines and instructions

Make sure you are familiar with the following WSC documents:

- Night Captain Guidelines
- Sailing Instructions
- Course Chart
- Race Signals
- Powerboat Operator's Checklist

▶ Contact all members of your RC team to confirm attendance

- All members assigned to race committee are responsible for covering their duty or finding a qualified replacement if they are unable to make it. But it's ultimately up to the Night Captain to make sure you have a full Race Committee team on race night.

On Race Day:

▶ Arrive on time

- Arrive at least 45 minutes before race time (5:45 pm for 6:30 pm start).

▶ Assign duties to all Race Committee members

- Committee Boat driver (usually the Night Captain)
- Committee Boat assistants (1-2)
- Safety Boat driver
- Safety Boat assistant

Note: all powerboat drivers must have a current Oregon Boater's Card.

▶ Check out and prepare 2 powerboats (one RC, one Safety Boat)

- load and connect fuel tanks
- check batteries
- check life jackets (one per passenger)
- turn on radios and set to channel 68
- load all necessary racing and safety equipment (see sidebar)

▶ Set the course

- Determine the appropriate course length and mark locations based on wind direction and velocity. Consider also the classes racing; i.e., Thistles prefer longer courses, Lasers prefer shorter courses.
- The goal is to set a course that is square to the wind. Sighting from the middle of the starting line, the windward mark should be directly upwind and the leeward mark should be directly downwind.

Choosing the Course

WSC uses two basic courses, Windward/Leeward and Triangle, with a couple of variations of each. Modified (M) courses start and finish in the middle of the course. Unmodified courses start at the leeward mark and finish at the windward mark. Course descriptions and suggested use are as follows (see WSC Course Chart for diagrams):

- ▶ **WM (Windward/Leeward Modified):** Starts and finishes in middle of course. Allows two short windward legs and one leeward leg. Does not require a separate finish line. The default course for north or south winds.
- ▶ **TM (Triangle Modified):** Same as above but adds a third mark to allow a reaching leg. A good choice on heavy wind days. Also useful for averting windward mark snafus in big fleets.
- ▶ **W (Windward/Leeward):** Starts at the leeward mark, finishes at the windward mark. Allows a longer final beat but requires a separate finish line. Use if you need longer course and can spare the Safety Boat for finishing. Recommended for east or west winds.
- ▶ **T (Triangle):** Same as above but with a reach leg.
- ▶ **OM (Olympic Modified):** Combines triangle and windward/leeward for maximum length and variety; starts and finishes in the middle of the course.
- ▶ **O (Olympic):** Same as above but starts at the leeward mark and finishes at the windward mark; the longest course on the menu.

- Pay careful attention to mark location and relative positions. Make sure they are surrounded by adequate water (i.e., not too close to shore) and closely aligned with each other (i.e., path from windward mark to leeward mark should lead directly through the starting line).
- Decide whether to use modified (M) or unmodified courses. Modified courses start and finish in the middle of the course and require only one boat for starts and finishes. Unmodified courses start at the leeward mark and finish at the windward mark, requiring a second boat for finishes but allowing for a longer final windward leg. **Tip:** if you're shorthanded or need to keep your Safety Boat free, stick to M courses.
- Select a course from the *WSC Course Chart* (see sidebar).

▶ Set the starting line

- In normal conditions, the line shall be set between an Orange Flag on the Committee Boat anchored at the windward (right) side of the line and a yellow buoy positioned at the leeward (left) side of the line.
- For unmodified courses (W, T, O) the pin end should be an orange buoy as it will double as the leeward mark.
- The starting line should be perpendicular (square) to the wind direction. Standing on the Committee Boat with your face into the wind, hold your left arm out at a 90° angle to the wind direction. It should be pointing at the leeward pin position.
- There are two ways to set the starting line: 1) anchor the Committee Boat and direct the Safety Boat to drop the yellow buoy in correct position to result in a square line, or 2) drop the yellow buoy, then anchor the Committee Boat slightly upwind of the line and let out anchor line until the boat has drifted into the correct position.
- Line length should be adequate to accommodate the size and number of boats in the largest fleet starting. As a general rule of thumb, allow about a boat length of line for each boat starting. For example, if 10 Thistles are starting, the line should be about 170 (10x17) feet long.

▶ Signals to Racers

- When the Committee Boat is on station and everything is ready to go, display Code Flag L (Come within Hail) 
- Determine which classes are racing, set the starting order, and communicate it to the racers. This can be done verbally or written on a white board displayed where it can be seen by the racers. **Tip:** start the fastest boats first.
- If you have any other verbal instructions for racers (i.e., restricted starting line, separate finish line, commercial traffic warning, etc.), now is the time to do it.
- Display the course letters, including number of laps if more than one, on the course board lashed to the back of the seat. **Note:** the course must be displayed no later than the warning signal for the fleet starting.
- Take down Code Flag L prior to beginning the starting sequence. **Note:** make sure the orange flag marking the starting line is up!

Setting & Retrieving Marks

Setting a Mark

- ▶ Determine correct position for mark and confirm with Night Captain. Caution: make sure engine is in neutral to avoid fouling anchor line.
- ▶ Drop a mushroom anchor and let anchor line run out through your hands until anchor hits bottom (it should run out without knots or tangles if it has been stowed properly; see Retrieving a Mark, below).
- ▶ If anchor does not hit bottom, retrieve it, attach an extension line to end of anchor line, and reset (this is why you need to keep the line in your hands at all times!)
- ▶ After anchor is on the bottom, release another 3-5 feet of line and clip long line on bottom of mark to next ring on anchor line.
- ▶ Clip short line on the bottom of mark to float on the end of the anchor line, and throw mark and excess line over.
- ▶ Check to make sure mark is holding position (be prepared to reset mark if it's drifting).

Retrieving a Mark

- ▶ Come alongside mark slowly and shift engine into neutral to avoid fouling anchor line. Tip: position bow slightly upwind of mark and let it drift down to it.
- ▶ Grab mark by the knuckle on the bottom or one of the attachment lines and heave it into the boat. Tip: use boat hook to grab attachment lines.
- ▶ Unclip long line from the ring and let it run.
- ▶ Unclip short line from float and, keeping it in your hands, flake line into the basket, float first, anchor on top (this way the line will run out next time without knots or tangles!).

During Racing

The Start

- Races are started on a 3-minute sequence using the following signals (this is a shortened version of RRS 26):

Minutes to start	Flag Signal	Sound
3	Class flag up 	1 horn
2	Prep flag up  	1 horn
1	Prep flag down 	1 horn
0	Class flag down	1 horn

- If you have 3 people on board the Committee Boat, assign one person to keep time, one person to raise and lower flags, and one person to do horns and line sight. If only 2 on board, have one person do timer and horns and second person do flags and line sight.
 - If possible, keep the clock running; i.e., the starting signal for the first fleet becomes the warning signal for second fleet. This means you will raise the second fleet's class flag at the same time you remove the first fleet's class flag (the more hands the better!). This will speed up the starting sequence and allow more racing.
 - It's OK to break the sequence if you need to; i.e., in case of a general recall or other situation requiring a pause before the next start. No need to fly Postponement flag; simply start a new sequence when ready.
- ▶ **Boats over early (OCS): Individual Recall** 
- If boats are over the line early at the start and you are able to identify them, sound one horn and fly Code Flag X (Individual Recall). It is a courtesy, but not a requirement, to call the numbers of the boats that were over early. **Tip:** station the Safety Boat at the leeward pin and have them call numbers of early starters to the Committee Boat over the radio. You should record the numbers in writing for later reference.
 - When all OCS boats have returned behind the line, lower Code Flag X and call "All Clear." The hail is a courtesy, not a requirement. If all OCS boats do not return, leave the X Flag up until the Preparatory signal for the next class or until 2 minutes have passed, whichever comes first.
- ▶ **Boats over early (OCS): General Recall** 
- If you are not able to identify all the boats over the starting line, sound 2 horns and fly the First Substitute Flag (General Recall). The warning signal for a new start for the recalled class shall be made one minute after the First Substitute is lowered with 1 horn.

► **If things go wrong: Postponement** 

- If things go wrong—and they do (timer stopped, signal missed, wrong flag displayed, etc.), raise Code Flag AP (Postponement) and sound 2 horns. You can do this at any time during a starting sequence or between sequences.
- When the problem is resolved, lower the AP Flag with one horn, then wait 1 minute before raising the warning signal for the next start.

The Race

When all fleets have started, the Race Committee's attention shifts to monitoring conditions on the course and looking out for the safety of the racers. All eyes need to be watchful for commercial traffic and other boating activity in the racing area that may pose a safety risk.

► **Commercial Traffic**

Keep a sharp lookout up and down the river for commercial traffic and monitor radio channel 68 at all times. Most commercial vessels approaching our race area will hail WSC on channel 68 and request an escort through the course. Under direction of the Night Captain, the Safety Boat shall lead the commercial vessel through the course using the following procedure:

- If an approaching vessel does not hail WSC on channel 68, try to hail it on channels 13, 14, or 16. After establishing contact, go to 68.
- Sound 4 long horn blasts to alert racers to oncoming commercial vessel. Repeat 4-horn signal frequently until traffic has cleared the course.
- Position Safety Boat 100-200 feet in front of commercial vessel, depending on size. Make sure pilot can see you at all times. **Caution:** do not get too far ahead of the vessel as this creates an unnecessary burden on racing boats trying to keep clear.
- Lead the vessel down the main channel, keeping to the right or left side as needed to cause minimum disruption to the fleets on the course. Anticipate the movement of the fleet and try to take a path that makes it easiest for them to keep clear. **Caution:** give marks a wide berth!
- Adjust speed as needed to maintain distance with the commercial vessel and control its passage through the race area. Stay in radio contact with the pilot at all times and let him know what you're doing.
- Make sure all communication with commercial pilots is courteous and respectful (they are always friendly and cooperative with us!).
- Any racing boat passing between the Safety Boat and the commercial vessel it is leading shall be disqualified from the race without opportunity for exoneration.
- **Tip:** when a commercial vessel is approaching before a start, it's a good idea to postpone and wait for it to clear the course.

► **Rescue Operations**

Committee Boat and Safety Boat must both be prepared to respond to boats in distress (capsized, grounded, disabled, etc.). Since the Committee Boat is normally anchored, it is the Safety Boat's responsibility to be the first responder to boats in distress. **Note:** *All powerboat drivers should be*

familiar with the rescue techniques in US Sailing's Basic Powerboating Safety & Rescue manual. Normal procedure in a rescue situation is to:

- Come alongside the disabled boat and shift into neutral to avoid damage to rigging or danger to crew in the water. Be sure to keep enough distance to avoid contact.
- Make visual and verbal check to determine that all crew are accounted for and OK. If any crew members are in the water, be sure to maintain visual contact with them at all times.
- Ask skipper if he or she requires assistance. If not, stand by until you can confirm that the crew is able to rescue their boat (usually they can).
- If skipper requests assistance, or if Safety Boat skipper determines that crew is in danger or unable to self-rescue, bring all crew aboard the Safety Boat immediately, right the boat (if possible), and tow it back to shore.
- When rescuing or towing a capsized or grounded boat, use extreme care to avoid injury to the crew or damage to the boat or equipment. If you are not familiar with safe rescue techniques, call for assistance.
- If any crew members appear to be in need of first aid (injury, panic, hypothermia, etc.), leave the boat and return immediately to shore (you can pick up the disabled boat later). **Important:** People first!

► Restricting the Starting Line

- The Race Committee may, at its discretion, declare the starting line restricted; that is, all boats not starting or finishing must stay clear. This option is not recommended and should only be used when the number of boats and fleets on the course are interfering with the race committee's ability to conduct orderly starts and finishes.
- To signal racers that the line is restricted, display code flag R 
- The penalty for boats crossing a restricted line is two turns. If they fail to exonerate themselves, the Race Committee or another boat may protest and they will be disqualified from the race.

When Conditions Change

Significant changes in wind direction or velocity may require adjustments to the course, including moving marks, shortening the course, postponing or abandoning racing.

► Moving marks

- If the wind shifts and the course is no longer square, the Night Captain may direct the Safety Boat to move one or more marks in order to square up the course.
- **Caution:** make sure the shift is permanent (not oscillating back and forth) and significant ($\pm 30^\circ$) before moving marks. Frequent wind shifts are common, especially in easterlies and westerlies, and it may not be possible to maintain a square course. Don't worry; most sailors prefer an imperfect race to no race at all.

▶ Shortening course

If the wind is dying and it's unlikely the fleet will finish under the time limit, you should consider shortening the course at the next turning mark.

- To shorten course, sound 2 horns and display Code Flag S 
- The finish line shall be between the mark and the boat displaying Code Flag S (normally the Safety Boat). **Note:** you cannot shorten at the finish line unless it is a mark of the course.
- If you intend to signal shortened course, you must do it before the first boat has crossed the finish line.

▶ Abandon racing

If finishing a race becomes impossible (too little wind, too much wind, darkness) or if the outcome of the race is compromised by Race Committee error (problem in the starting procedure, drifting mark, etc.), you should abandon the race.

- To abandon, sound 3 horns and display Code Flag N 

The Finish

▶ The Finish Line

- For modified (M) courses, the starting line normally serves as the finish line. But if you have multiple fleets racing, it's a good idea to set a separate finish line to starboard of the Committee Boat to help keep starters and finishers from getting tangled up.
- The separate finish line shall be between a blue flag on the committee boat and a red ball on the starboard side of the line. Like the starting line, the finish line should be square to the wind direction, but doesn't need to be as long.
- If you need to move any marks to adjust the finish line, you must do it before the boats finishing are on their final leg.
- **Important:** if you intend to set a separate finish line, be sure to communicate that to all racers prior to the start (i.e., display the blue flag).
- For non-modified courses, the safety boat shall anchor to starboard of the windward mark and display a blue flag. The finish line will be between the windward mark and the flag staff. The finish line should be square to the wind direction.

▶ Recording finishes

- It's critical to record the sail numbers of finishing boats clearly and accurately on the Finish Worksheet. Assign one person to call numbers and another to write them down. Use breaks between finishers to confirm numbers and make corrections if needed. Write clearly!
- **For Lasers Only:** record only the last 4 digits of the sail number on the Finish Worksheet. **Tip:** call finishers' numbers into a voice recorder so you can reference later in case of a snafu in the written records.
- Racers intending to file a protest must notify the Race Committee upon finishing. Record the class and sail number of protesting boats on the Finish Worksheet.

After Racing

▶ Sweeping the course

- Retrieve all marks and anchors.
- Make sure all racers have returned safely to shore.

▶ Boat Check-in

- Return power boats to boathouse and make sure that they are clean and secure before leaving (see *Powerboat Operator's Checklist*).
- Complete the *Powerboat Operator's Checklist* and file it in the Fleet Captain's box in the clubhouse.

▶ Protests

- Time limit for boats filing a protest is 15 minutes after the Committee Boat reaches the dock. If no protests are received by the time limit, the Night Captain shall close protests and Finish Sheets may be finalized.
- If any protests are filed within the time limit, the Night Captain shall assign 2-3 persons to serve on Protest Committee. Protest Committee members should be knowledgeable and experienced in the racing rules and should have no conflicts of interest resulting from the protest.
- Night Captain and other Race Committee members may serve on Protest Committee, but are not required to do so.
- Protest hearings will use the 3-minute justice system (see *Race Instructions* for details)

▶ Scoring

- Double-check numbers on Finish Sheet against the roster of registered sail numbers and try to correct any discrepancies.
- Update scores to include all DNFs, OCSs, and DSQs
- Fill in name, date and file completed worksheet in Race Results box.
Important: please make sure finish sheets are properly filed so scorer can find them!