

## Raising The Bar Has Consequences

In club racing, the performance, and number of competing yachts have risen dramatically in recent years. This has increased the inevitability of on-the-water-incidents, and heightened the need for the knowledge and application of the RRS (Racing Rules of Sailing).

**All clubs want to provide racing which all members enjoy, enough to keep coming back for more.**

Sadly, a few skippers occasionally slip into bad habits. They resort to personalised (sometimes verbally offensive) covering up of incidents. The RRS are not applied and incidents are not resolved. Apologies are not given and any damage is left for the aggrieved skipper to sort afterwards. He/she and many other normally positive-minded skippers leave the day with a sour memory, and question whether it is worth the effort next time.

There is another way. The following story is worth telling for the health of our radio yacht racing going forward.

### A Tactical Finale

In a recent championship, twenty one yachts were split into A and B heats using the Simple Heat Racing System. The Race Officials used the light to mid A rig variable winds to get through 11 qualifying races on Saturday. Yachts 23 and 03 were the overnight leaders, with 03 first on countback.

The ROs switched to Finals racing on Sunday and managed to squeeze in four races each time a little wind came through. 03 took the first two races with 23 in second. 03 then blew the third race with three unforced errors into 7th and handed a third to 23.

For the final race, 23 needed to beat 03 by three or more places to take the regatta, and sure enough, the two yachts provided a thrilling climax to the regatta.

Two thirds of the way down the first run, 23 persistently luffed 03 to the left, to let the following 5 yachts catch up. At the last minute, 03 wriggled away enough to gybe onto starboard, force 23 back to the leeward mark and still keep an overlap into the zone. While 03 and 23 spun through 180 degrees round the mark, the five yachts went more smoothly round the outside to overtake the two combatants and head back upwind for the beat. The last of them cut across 03 and slowed - presumably for a tack.

In a heartbeat, 03's skipper made the snap decision to avoid the yacht by going below, keep way on, and go for the right-hand side of the beat. 23 contacted and called "2 - 3 protests Zero 3".

In the split seconds available, 03's skipper decided 23 had not given 03 room to avoid the yacht, called a reverse protest ("Zero 3 protests 2 - 3"), and sailed on to win the race with 23 second... pending the protests.

### Calm And Collected Conclusion

Under pressure for the Prize Giving, the host club gets a "Highly Commended" for enabling arbitration and a paperless protest system to resolve the situation calmly and efficiently. The RO established the validity of both protest calls, ran the arbitration and handed over to the Protest Committee for the protest called by 03.

The two processes drew out the rules involved in 03 and 23's incident. Both skippers had full opportunity to talk, be heard and clarify every step of the incident. The chairman gathered facts and gave a clear ruling.

03 and 23 were deemed to have cleared the mark and 03 became windward yacht and did not keep clear. With 03 not calling for water to avoid the other yacht, 03 was disqualified and 23 won the race and the regatta.

Everyone present gained from the process and proved that it is a positive and healthy way to operate in radio yacht racing. After shaking hands, the skippers agreed... *"The best part was the way the whole process evolved, starting on the water, the hails were civil and correct, simple, properly delivered, no shouting or animosity. Then, both put the matter aside and sailed the race. From there due process was applied, properly addressed and decided, with no animosity or complaints; it was part of yacht racing, and we are still mates."*

**Hats off to the host club for a memorable regatta. We all want to go back for more.**