

## KYC RACING "Frequently Asked Questions"

assembled by Pat Corbitt with the invaluable help of the KYC Racing Committee

Well it's not "everything-you-always-wanted-to-know-about-racing-but-were-afraid-to-ask," however, the following installment of the KYC Racing "FAQ" is a good start, most especially if you're new to racing. Give it a look.

### **Q: What is KYC Racing anyway?**

A: Our Club has a Race Committee, which sets up and conducts a series of Wednesday evening sailboat races and special Race events and regattas on select weekends throughout the sailing season. These races are run by an "on-water" Race Committee from our Committee Boat, "Observer," and conducted according to PHRF (that's the acronym for "Performance Handicap Racing Fleet") and other applicable racing rules and traditions.

### **Q: Where are the races run?**

A: The KYC races are run on specific courses marked by our race (and some navigation) buoys on Raritan Bay. The starting line is usually past the mooring field and the Green buoy on the way across the bay in the direction of Staten Island.

### **Q: Do you have to be a Club member with a boat to race?**

A: Yes and no. The boats that race in the Wednesday Night races belong to Club members, but special Race Weekend Events are often open to non-Club sailors. A good example is the Annual Bill Volk Race in June when the Club hosts sailors in the Leukemia benefit races. Of course many crew on all boats are non-members, even on the Wednesday Night races.

### **Q: What if I don't have a boat? Can I still participate in the KYC racing experience?**

A: You bet! Both members and non-members can participate in KYC racing as crew. Often Club members have crew who are friends and not members. These crew come as the guest of the Club member and sail in the races. Captains looking for crew post notices and sign-up sheets on the Racing Bulletin Board at the Club. Start there, but ask around if you have any questions about how to get involved.

### **Q: I'm new to racing. How is a race set up? Am I going to be racing against Olympians?**

A: Contrary to popular opinion not all racers eat their dead. While the Club racing is highly competitive, your level of skills, type of boat and general experience is taken into account when assigning your boat to one of the racing fleets. Races are set up to place similar boats and comparable crews in a Fleet. If you're good, you'll be against other good sailors. If you're a beginner, you'll find other racing newbies in the Fleet. The idea is to have fun and compete fairly.

### **Q: What's a Racing Fleet and where or how would I fit in one?**

A: A Racing Fleet is simply a grouping of similar vessels that will compete against one another under a national handicap system (that's the "PHRF" rules noted above) where the playing ground is level and all have a reasonably fair chance to win or place well. Your boat is the major factor in determining which of KYC's two fleets you would fit in. The Class A Fleet is for very competitive vessels with spinnakers and the Class B Fleet is for Cruisers or Racer-Cruisers who do not fly a spinnaker.

### **Q: What are the rules for racing and, if I don't know them, where can I learn?**

A: Believe it or not, most of the basic rules for racing are common sense boating safety rules. This means giving way to a boat on starboard tack, avoiding collisions, and the like. But there are specific and important racing rules that help you determine what is fair and not fair in a variety of "on-the-race-course" situations. There are several places to learn the racing rules. For starters, you can attend the KYC "Intro to Racing" seminar on May 10th at 7:00PM at the Club. And, if you can go on-line, you'll find an excellent website at: [www.ussailing.org/racing/](http://www.ussailing.org/racing/). The site is deep in great explanations as well as some cool graphics and animations to help you understand and visualize the rules in action. A trip to the local marine supplier's bookshelf (or on-line at Amazon.com) will yield a wealth of good literature on sailboat racing. Also, check out the North Sails Racing books/CD packages.

## **More from the KYC Racing FAQ**

### **Q: Where do I find the schedule of races, race courses, times and so forth?**

A: There are five places that list the information on KYC Racing: the KYC Website (you can find race results there too) at [www.keyportyachtclub.com](http://www.keyportyachtclub.com), the Racing Bulletin Board, and the Club Newsletter, "Now Hear This," the KYC Racing Handbook, and the little "Calendar of Events" card that came to you at the beginning of the year with your membership information.

### **Q: How do I enter a race?**

A: It's always a good idea to let the Chairman of the Race Committee know you're interested in racing. He can help you find the right competitive level and answer any specific questions you may have. For the 2006 season, John Lovie is the Racing Committee Chair. You can reach him by leaving a message at the Club office or by email at: [john\\_lovie@etitrain.com](mailto:john_lovie@etitrain.com)

### **Q: So when I finish in "first place" I win, right?**

A: In the America's Cup races, the Olympics, and most hard-core racing, the boats are all equal – whoever finishes first wins. In club racing that's not the case because there are so many different kinds of boats... even within a given Fleet. At KYC we use the Performance Handicap Rating Fleet (PHRF) system, which lets boats of different types and sizes compete against each other on an equal basis. Boats competing in the Club's A and B fleets are expected to get an official handicap from PHRF- Mid Atlantic. You'll find the Applications are on the Race Committee board. If you don't have an official handicap, the Race Committee will assign one. If you need help filling out the form, just ask the Race Committee.

### **Q: So how does this PHRF stuff work?**

A: It's a little involved to get into in any depth here, but here are the basics. In PHRF handicap racing, since the boats are unequal, they are assigned a rating that represents the difference in speed over some imaginary baseline boat. This baseline boat is really "hot", like a J-130, and has a rating of 0. Everyone else is compared to that, and is given a rating that represents how many seconds per mile different your boat speed should be compared to the base boat.

Steve Fronapfel, a long time racer at KYC, puts it this way: My Catalina 30 was rated at 180, which means that in a one mile race, the J-130 should beat me by 180 seconds. Two miles, 360 seconds and so forth. If we were sailing a 4 mile course, my handicap would give me 4 times 180, or 720 seconds adjustment to that boat. If he beats me by 719 seconds or less over the finish line, I win." You go, Steve!

Each boat's actual time is adjusted based on the handicap and distance and the adjusted times are compared to see who finishes in first, second, third place, etc. Pretty neat, eh?

### **Q: What if I break a rule or make a mistake on the race course?**

A: Well, this isn't "Survivor-Exile Island" and no one has yet been banished for failing to give way. But the rules about crashing into another boat notwithstanding, there are penalties for infractions. Run over a buoy and you have to do a 360 degree penalty turn (and not be in anybody's way when you do it). Cut a boat off at the mark rounding and you're likely to get a penalty flag thrown at you and have to pay some time for your sins. The Race Committee arbitrates these kinds of events and so far we've not had to use the firing squad.

### **Q: So now you have my attention. I'm serious. Where do I start?**

A: Pay attention to the Race Committee, maybe even volunteer to help and learn the real rules like the back of your hand. That knowledge will set you free on the racecourse. Get a copy of the "Sailing Instructions" (the "SIS," as they're called) and study them. Then study your boat, fill out a PHRF application so you can get a rating, practice with your crew and go out on Wednesday night and have some real fun.

### **Q: So, I'm gonna have fun, right?**

A: On the water? The best. And you won't hate the burgers after either.

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