

Procedure for FGSC Race Officer of the Day

This Race Officer's guide is aimed at anyone doing the RO for the first time and is unfamiliar with the equipment and where to find everything you will need. This is the first challenge to anyone joining us from another club.

Thereafter, it highlights some errors that we have witnessed over the years and raises numerous considerations which the RO should give thought to, preferably on the day before race day.

Holyfield Lake brings its own challenges to the RO by virtue of its irregular shape. Wind shadows, islands and weed growth meaning that good practice, observation and imagination are called for, if the racing is to be of a good standard. Parts 2 and 3 are therefore the 'Don't dos' and the 'Do These Where Appropriate' items that should see the job done well.

Part 1-Preparing the Equipment

1. If the office key cupboard is locked, the key for it can be found in the key box located in the cupboard just behind the Ladies changing room door. The key required has a red tab attached.
2. Go to the key cabinet in the office and obtain the "Race Officer" key set. Key sets are labelled and a Key Identification List is hanging from the side cupboard.

The RO keyset should be on peg 7 and has a small plastic bottle attached for quick identification. The keyset also includes:

- Ignition key for the outboard engine on committee boat Bittern
 - T-key to power up electrical systems on Bittern
 - Key marked ASCO. This fits the race officer's cupboard in the training (store) room/also the boathouse/the padlock chaining the workboat Phoenix to the dock/the padlock chaining committee boat Bittern to its jetty. It also fits the fuel store on the island.
3. Collect a 2-way radio from one of the charging bases in the office.
 4. If self-service water taxi is required, also take the key for workboat Phoenix. (or someone will give you a ride out to the island).
 5. Check the racing programme for the day and mark up a fresh 'Sign on sheet' accordingly. Leave it set out prominently on shelf under the noticeboard.
 6. Go to the race officers cupboard in the training room and collect:
 - The Sailing Timer box
 - The orange box containing score sheets/calculator/course suggestion book.
 - Check you have a supply of new 'Race Record' score sheets.
 - Before going afloat, it's recommended that RO checks that working pens are also in the orange box.

7. Either request a 'water taxi' to the committee boat from the Rescue Team if available. Otherwise open the boathouse and prepare Pheonix for your own use.
 - The key for Pheonix can found in the office key cupboard.

(Two people will be required, as one will be needed to return Pheonix back to the boathouse)
8. Unfasten the security chain, disconnect the battery charging cable (hand it to one side) and start the engine using the dedicated ignition key.
9. Depending on the circumstances on the day you can either request/instruct the Race Team to collect and deploy temporary race marks (X,Y and Z) and the Outer Distance (sausage)mark. Use your 2-way radio to direct them as required. If 'Rescue' are not available, to do this you will need to collect these marks from the rescue boat enclosure on the island and deploy them yourself.
10. Arriving at the committee boat, remove the security chain and the boat cover.
11. Put the ignition key in the Morse control and the T-key in the socket on the starboard side near the stern. Turn the T-key 90 deg and power becomes available.
12. Check your fuel supply in the tank, pump the fuel line bulb, use the engine tilt control to lower the engine, select starting revs and start the engine. If necessary, in cold weather push and hold key in for choke.
 - If fuel has not been replenished by the Bosun, you can motor round to the fuel store shed behind the Rescue RIB shelter. The ASCO key should fit the fuel store.
13. Motor to your chosen starting area near the leeward end of the lake. As you go, take note of the wind direction and resultant wind shadows, comparing your observations with any forecasts you may have read 'on-line'. You may also take this opportunity to patrol for any weed growth in high season and consider its impact on the racing.
Conduct your own survey rather than believe everything you are told by others.
14. Anchor in your chosen position, considering the resting position of Bittern and the length/position of the start line to be set. Ask Rescue to position the ODM sausage if you are not doing it yourself. When anchoring, note that the water may be much deeper in the northern part of the lake but there are local variations. Using all of the anchor chain helps ensure the anchor is in the best orientation to engage with the lake bed.

When raising the anchor, drive the boat forward fully over the anchor chain. This action will tip the anchor backwards and out of the mud, making it easier to manually haul the anchor up.
15. The flags are hanging in the cabin. They are all labelled.
16. Set up the appropriate flags for the event as indicated on the Flag Tree. For a regular club Sunday points you will expect to use: Menagerie/Solo/Blue Peter (preparatory)/Shorten Course/Individual Recall/General Recall. The Change of Course flag may likely be needed later.

17. Set the Line Transit Staff into its vertical tube bracket on either port or starboard side, with the staff's orange coloured square facing away from Bittern.

Part 2-Using the Timing Box and Course Cards

1. Clip the timing box to the wheelhouse canopy frame on the same side as the Line Transit Staff, accompanied by its lid which displays the operating instructions. Unwind the horn connection lead and plug it into the socket alongside the Line Transit Staff's vertical tube bracket. Briefly push the orange button on the front of the Sailing Timer Unit. The horn will sound, indicating that the timer unit is correctly connecting with the horn system.

The Sailing Timer also has a handheld horn signalling button which is attached by a captive lead to the timer unit. However this button only comes into operation once the race duration counter is activated. It also provides a method of recording boat finishing times within the unit. For further details please see the Race Officers Handbook.

Independent of the Sailing Timer, there are three horn buttons each mounted on the port, stern and starboard interior trim moldings.

2. Press the on/off button on the right side of the timing box to set it working and follow the instructions displayed on the lid. A typical club Sunday will require 2 starts, which is programmed in the Sailing Timer as 'P2'. For a single start use 'P3'.
3. Please remember to turn Sailing Timer 'Off', after all of the day's racing is complete.
4. The port/starboard Course Cards are stored in the locker under the helmsman's seat. You will find cards for marks 1-12 plus X/Y/Z and G, as well as the number of laps.
5. Slide them onto the course board in the required order before sliding/swinging the course board outboard and engaging it on the hook on the Transit Staff.

Please note, the course board is detachable from its stowage position. If you wish to use the course board on the port side of Bittern, detach the left end of the board only, then slide and swing it into position, or vice versa for using on the Starboard side of Bittern.

18. Results sheets are in the orange box. Please fill in the information clearly so the Sailing Secretary can read and understand it a week later. Take care to identify Laser Radials from Standard rig Lasers.
19. Bear in mind the motion of Bittern if windy, and note that port/starboard mud weights are supplied to prevent it swinging on its mooring.

Part 3-Setting the Course

When setting your course there are many pitfalls which have been discussed at length. Here are a few things we have seen going wrong from time to time.

1. The RO checks the forecast the day before his duty and plans what course he thinks will be suitable. He rocks up the next morning but the forecast wind is not there. But he sets up for what he expected anyway!
2. The RO arrives really early, collects Bitterne and sets up in the conditions prevailing an hour before the race. By 'race time' (or by when everyone is finally ready.....ha ha!) the wind has changed. (But the course remains the same.)
3. The RO sets up the first race and all goes well, but by the next race the wind has shifted noticeably. The RO needs to respond to the change;- maybe a total re-design of the course.... But he can't be bothered. (The awkwardness of moving Bitterne and the ODM is just too much trouble, especially if working without an assistant. Responding to a changing wind wins races and also makes for a good RO.
4. Postponing, (formally with the A/P pennant if you wish) may be appropriate while a new course is designed and displayed is considered an unwelcome delay. Better to delay 10 minutes and set a good (new?) course that the can fleet enjoy.
5. An inexperienced or weak RO will often seek an Assistant from his pals who are at the same low standard as himself.
6. The RO fails to consider the needs of the different classes (if FGSC is not to be a singlehander only club....). Boats with spinnakers hate close reaches where they cannot be used satisfactorily as well as courses with gybe marks involving a "handbrake turn".
7. We still occasionally see courses where the fleet follow a windward shore-line. A cardinal sin from the RO, resulting in the fleet luffing each other into the doldrums with the exception of one or two lucky boats who slip away to leeward into a huge lead. For most competitors, the race is effectively over from that point on.
8. Another cardinal sin can be the use of the Gate. Splitting a (probably already short) beat into two halves is very bad practice. Everyone understands they need to pass through the finish line just once, i.e. at the finish when the Shorten Course flag is likely displayed.

Part 4: Points to Consider

1. The best course is one that provides the most chances to overtake. This means getting the beat square to the wind. If the beats cannot be made of good (maximum) length, more than one beat may commonly be required. On a good beat, boats should spend roughly half their time on starboard, half on port.
2. Try to design as much upwind work into the course as possible. The other parts of the course will largely fall into place.

3. Off-wind, reaches can be boring and processional unless it is really windy. Gybes close to a lee shore are best avoided if it is windy. A run is the reciprocal of a beat and should therefore be tactical and require some decision making from the competitors.
4. If in doubt, ask your “clients” if they approve of your course. Before setting your final position you may ask someone to steer a close-hauled heading to reveal the actual wind direction across the breadth of the course (not necessarily the direction shown by Bitterne’s roof-top wind indicator!).
5. When wind shadows are an issue you can deploy a temporary mark to keep the boats in breeze. Don’t forget you can set a temporary leeward mark to lengthen a beat if there is more usable space downwind.
6. If the wind is shifty, the changes may average out if the beat is long. With short beats/legs, each one could become processional if a significant wind-shift should occur.
7. Directing the fleet through the Gate (G) should only be done when it is likely that exceptionally slow boats will need to be finished early and be given ‘Average Lap’ times. Therefore, identify any likely suspects before you invoke the Gate. In such circumstance, try to make the gate so generous that most boats will pass naturally through it as they sail round the course.
8. Setting a course which anticipates a forecast wind swing is more likely to fail than succeed. If the new wind does arrive (and shows signs of settling) during the pre-start, just abandon the start (four hoots) and re-lay the course. Better everyone waste 5 minutes and not 45. If the new wind arrives during the race, you can always move temporary marks.
9. Any leg is remembered more for its worst bit (e.g. too close to the trees) not its best bit(s).
10. Try to avoid finishing the last race of the session at the furthest point from the club. If participants have to sail that distance home they may as well be racing! You can move the committee boat easily to achieve this, and finish at any suitable mark.
11. You may find that the wind direction in the north half of the lake is different from that in the south half. This noticeably occurs with a SW blowing from the ‘nature reserve’.