

Report on the 470 Master's Cup 2014 in Oberhofen and recommendations

Organization

The organization under Stefan Seger before the race and Stefan Pulfer and Peter Kurz during the race was perfect. The village of Oberhofen participated with more helpers than there were boats; the officials were present. Swiss Sailing sent a delegate.

A team greeted the sailors, unloaded the boats on the trolley and stored the trailers, the helpers labelled and redirected cars to a near parking, and there was no waiting line.

The local school classes became measurement, jury room and wardrobe. There were enough showers and lavatories and even a Jacuzzi. A restaurant operated in a tent where all had place, a beamer showed the event pictures. A free wireless operated all the time.

The mobile homes received a camp within 50 m of the event. Good hotels were within a few minutes distance. The social program included a brunch in the mountains with downhill scooters, a musical evening (with the RC chief at the guitar) and local folkloric groups.

Already during the preparation phase, the document exchange was impressive and the progress of the organization easy to follow.

By contrast, the 470 Int. Management Committee took often a long time to react, in particular because of disagreement on the contract terms that nearly caused the retirement of Oberhofen. Indeed, Oberhofen accepted reluctantly the conditions although they issued their bid under the conditions stated in the Manual 2011.

For Hungary 2015 and Italy 2016, only the Manual available on the 470 web site at the time of the bid submission is a valid base for a contract. The organizers are not aware of other conditions and may retire their candidature if conditions change afterward.

Recommendation:

- 1) The 470 International Management Committee should be responsive and conclude contracts well in advance and on a defined base.
- 2) The 470 International MC should not change the conditions under which a Club presents its candidature after it selected the venue.

Entries and fees

The 470 Master's Cup attracted 53 boats from nine countries, which is less than expected.

Switzerland (16 boats) was well represented;
Germany (13) was below expectations;
France (12) was below average;
Italy (4 boats) was disappointing;
Greece (4) was a highlight;
Israel (1) is a good first, they hope to come back with more boats;
Belgium (1) was disappointing;
Romania (1) was disappointing;
Spain (1) was disappointing;
Hungary sent no boat; this is rather surprising for a nation that will host the next event and a reason to activate the local fleet for the 2015's Master's Cup;
Ireland, UK and New Zealand were missing;

The costs of the charter boats were obviously too high (1000.- SFr), not a single boat was chartered (ISR 7 sailed a German boat)

The inscription fees summed to the high costs of living in Switzerland (2€50 Fr for a coffee,

100€ Fr for a hotel night) deterred many crews, especially from Italy and France. Only a few foreign crews attended the gala dinner (55€.-/person without wine).

Indeed, the only complaint heard was about the non-included dinners, which added another 120€ on top of the entry fees, so many sailors with family chose not to come. The organizers relied heavily on sponsorship (33 sponsors) for most of the budget. Entry fees contributed to less than ¼ of the budget.

In retrospect, the fee increase of the 470 International had three effects:

- 1) fewer boats came to the event
- 2) since there were fewer boats, the organizers had to fight for more sponsors.
- 3) no boat came because of the “upgrade”.

Masters can of course afford an additional 60€, but had the feeling that the “professionalization” envisioned by the 470 MC boils down to attracting fewer boats with richer sailors, and while the Class asks for some 3300€ more without any risk, the organizers could be left with a hard fight for sponsors and a possible deficit. No sponsor however asked how many Olympic crews participated. The sailors already contribute to the 470 International through their National Associations, so an additional fee for those who come penalizes a fraction of the sailors.

Recommendation:

- 3) The 470 International should not ask for money in excess of the services it provides. Entry fee is a sensitive indicator of the participation.
- 4) Costs must be kept low, especially for charter boats (below 500€) to attract sailors from remote countries.

Measurement

The announced “stricter” measurement turned out to be unprofessional. On Saturday, the measurer weighted the boats while rain was pouring on the waiting line. He did not open the tanks to see if the boat was dry inside nor did he empty the spinnaker bags. So practically all boats were overweight by up to 6 kg. One boat was even weighed with a fender still attached to protect the transom.

Not all boats were weighted. Some came through because they had been weighted at La Rochelle 2013. This is unacceptable: all boats must undergo the same measurements.

The weighing of the masts was a drag: except for the top sailor boats, this was the first time the sailors weight the mast. Many bought a second-hand boat from a top-notch sailor assuming the whole boat is conformant. This was an opportunity to be check the mast weight. However, since mast underweight from factory is known, insisting on it is unfair.

The measuring was awkward: if the shrouds or halyards touched the ground, even slightly, the scale would indicate too low. In previous events, measurers weighted the boats once with the mast and once without the mast as a further check.

Since the compensation weights are by slices of less than 500g, the balance should have a precision of at least 0.3%. This was obviously not the case: the balance precision was untrusted. There were differences of up to 200 g in the mast's weight in consecutive measurements. A comparison with a mechanical balance seemed to give the same value, but this did not replace the missing calibration weights.

For a pedagogical exercise, it would have been sufficient to indicate how much weight was missing and to warn the crew to come back with a conformant mast next time. A 200 g difference in the mast would not have changed the ranking list of this event.

Instead, insisting on corrected weight did cost a lot of time, nerves and discussions, some

could not compete in the tune-up race because of this, other had to drive to distant places to find a shop still open on Sunday to purchase lead, and of course many removed the surplus for the competition, with full understanding of the other competitors.

The marks on the boom and mast were the only additional check. When no mechanical limitation was present, the measurer put a rivet on the mast top. He did so even in masts where the main halyard is held by a mast head lock, showing little technical understanding: the rivet prevented the hooking of the main sail and the sailors had to remove the rivet after the "measurement" to be able to hoist or lower the mainsail. This is solution 3 in the document of 2011 of Dimitris Dimou, but the measurer ignored solution 1 and 2.

The measurer did not check the spinnaker pole length. The sails were barely stamped.

This hassle was avoidable – and with the same effect on the competition - by letting the sailors prepare their boats at home with proper tooling.

The sailors however did not receive the instructions that Dimitris Dimou promised (*his mail of 2014 April 10*):

"the instructions I was referring to were meant for the sailors, how to prepare their boats so they go through measurement without problems to themselves and to the measurers. This is not needed until a few weeks before the event."

In retrospect, the sending of the 470 appointed measurer was unnecessary and to some extent discredited the Class. The local measurers present were well aware of the Class rules and they did not gain any new knowledge. They helped the competitors how to reach compliance, but could not intervene.

Recommendations

5) The MC should not appoint a 470 Class Official Measurer unless it has serious doubts as to the qualification of the local measurers.

6) The measurer should do the measurement seriously and for all boats so that one can rely on the result to take corrective measures, even if this is only for pedagogical purpose.

7) The NoR should announce items to measure with a few weeks of anticipation to allow the sailors to correct it. For instance, weighting the rudder blade or the centerboard without prior notice is out of question since sailors are not equipped to correct this on-site.

8) The MC should issue a booklet to guide the national measurers. The document of Dimitri Dimou "COMMON MEASUREMENT PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS, JUNE 2011 is a useful guide, but it should be updated as promised (an unpublished 2013 version seems to exist).

9) The Class Measurer should consider revision of the rule concerning the placement of the compensation weighs for the mast within 200 mm from the upper point. Putting these weighs on the top of the mast is clumsy and penalize more than weighs attached to the spreaders or than heavier fittings. The competitors should put the compensation where they wish, the weight of the mast and Rule C.12.4 is sufficient. If sailors select too light a mast, they also incur the danger that their mast breaks in a strong wind. The top competitors should give their opinion on this issue.

Race Committee

The Race Committee under Franz Bürgi did a great job. Under the encountered wind conditions, it would have been impossible to sail one more race. Franz Bürgi announced that he would lay two courses, R (with relief mark, two fleets) and L (simple up-down and two fleets). The RC also asked the sailors for their preference, there was a small majority for course R. The RC had to abandon course R in view of the wind conditions and explained the difficulties encountered. The sailors accepted this choice, although many would have

liked to know their overall ranking. The fleets did mix often; top teams overtook the bottom of the fleet ahead already before the end of the first leg. However, with that fleet size, it did not disturb much. An inner loop-outer loop would have been overkill for 2 x 26 boats.

The organizers tried the ranking software proposed by the 470 International and rejected it as too complex. For an event of this format, the Velum software is sufficient. In addition, the links to the web page of the software of the 470 International were not going to work.

Recommendation

10) The MC should not appoint a 470 Course Representative unless it has serious doubts about the qualification of the local RC – the organizers should ask for it.

11) The MC should include courses L and R into the Manual and give the RC more freedom.

12) The MC should provide a user-friendly, free, ranking software or leave the organizers free in their choice of the software.

Jury

Ulrich Finckh, international judge, said that a Master's Cup does not need anything but a Protest Committee. There was not a single protest in 2014. An international jury with five members is a waste of money. Since there should be two judges on a boat for instant penalties, going to five judges makes only two jury boats, one per fleet, same as with a Protest Committee.

Recommendation

13) The MC should not require a full International Jury. A Protest Committee with one international judge is sufficient

Web presence

Results, photos and wind conditions appear on the event web site, <http://www.470masterscup.ch>. The organizers updated constantly the results. Press communiqués and interviews with sailors came on radio and local media.

By contrast, at the writing of this report, the results of the race do not show up on the 470 International web site. This website seems inactive, saying since 1st of March 2014 "*Unfortunately the International 470 Class Association website is not fully functioning at the moment and we apologize for the inconvenience...*" The "latest news" date back 26/10/2010. From looking at the web page, the Class seems abandoned — a shame. Erico Hoffmann as a volunteer did a far better job than those "professionals" did.

Recommendation

14) The MC should ensure that the 470 Int web page be active all the time and reports on the events in real time.

15) The MC should not change the web provider without a fall-back solution. The web page is the display of a Class's strength.

Next event

At the closing ceremony, I announced that the next venue will be Balaton. From the hand-raising, we can estimate that about 26 boats will come. This is too low a number. Publicity is indispensable to attract more boats. Many sailors have to arrange their vacations for the coming year already in December.

I asked MC for the sailors' emails on July 30th and received until today no response.

Recommendation

16) The MC and the Master's Committee should work in close cooperation to ensure a large participation. In principle, the contracts and NoR should be ready before December so the sailors can start preparing their year 2015.

Sailing Instructions: Sign-in, sign-out

The RC clarified that there was no sign-in, sign-out in Oberhofen. The Jury and RC discussed with the sailors about the value of sign-in/sign-out in past events. A signing of the boats that is not controlled is just a disciplinary measure that brings nothing to sport. In the 470 class, it is easy to see that a boat did not return since its trolley ashore is empty.

A poor example was Varna 2010: two promising crews forgot to sign-out and were so heavily penalized the first day that they had no medal chance any more, although the weather conditions were benign and the number of boats was small. This was worse than a couple of black flags.

As another poor example, in Gaeta 2012, the safety crew had already left the harbor area while a number of boats were still outside tacking in a 5 Bf wind to come home, with several capsizing. When these boats came ashore, the lists had been removed, no one checked the lists.

Also, one cannot penalize a boat in difficulty that did not sail up to the Race Committee boat to announce its retirement, especially if there are obstacles.

Recommendation

17) The Sailing Instructions should ask the sailors to sign-in / sign-out only if the local authorities require it and in this case, the Jury should apply penalties only under rule 69.

18) The RC may not require afterwards sign-in / sign-out if the Sailing Instructions do not specify it.

19) If sign-in/out is mandatory, all safety crews shall remain on the water between harbor and sailing area until the last boat signed in.

20) The safety officer shall check that all trolleys are loaded before allowing the safety crews to leave the area.

Sailing Instructions: D-flag and L-flag

The Jury debated whether the handling of the L-flag on the starting boat in Oberhofen was correct. Swiss practice is to hoist the L-flag ("follow-me") on the starting boat to indicate that the boats shall go to water. There was no pole ashore in Oberhofen, so hoisting "L" could not call attention to new instructions.

The RC indicates on the previous day the exact hour of the first starting signal of the race. Boats should not await the L-flag to go on the water. If the race cannot take place, the RC would hoist AP. Removing the AP means going to the water.

If there is a change of the sailing area, the sailors shall follow the starting boat independently of the L-flag. The missing L-flag on the arrival line is not a signal to go ashore. N over A, or N over H tell to go ashore.

The D-flag could only mean that the safety boats are not available. However, if no safety boat is on the water while boats are training, the flag is useless.

Recommendation

21) The sailing instructions shall clarify the usage of D- and L flags on the RC boat and on-shore. If prohibition of sailing is necessary for safety and a boat does not observe it, the Protest Committee should decide on the penalty under Rule 69.

Sailing Instructions: number of races per day

The SI say:

8.2 *No more than three races will be sailed each day.*

8.3 *Races not sailed on the scheduled day may be sailed on a following day at the discretion of the race committee.*

§8.3 cannot apply if the number of races a day is not defined. §8.3 can only be used if two races are scheduled and one scheduled race from the previous day could not be run.

The spirit of §8.2 is to consider the age of the Masters (and Grand-Grand Masters). Sailing more than three races a day with Bf6 is out of question for Masters. Letting them abandon the race area if they chose not to race a further race is a safety problem since the weakest boats with exhausted sailors would be sailing back to the harbor while the rescue boats remains on the race area (as seen in Gaeta).

On the other hand, under the weak wind conditions of Oberhofen this year, it would have been possible to sail one race in the morning, go back to land and sail three races in the afternoon, without straining the capacity of the sailors. This could have saved a championship in difficult wind conditions. However, the validity of such a championship could be challenged since it was run in a single day under poor wind condition.

Recommendation

22) The Sailing Instructions should indicate the number of scheduled races for every day.

23) The Sailing Instructions should precise that §8.3 is only applicable if §8.2 is observed, i.e. if two or less races were scheduled that day and not all races were sailed the preceding day.

24) The Sailing Instructions should give more freedom to the RC with respect to the application of §8.2 in weak wind conditions, under respect of a fair race.

Sailing Instructions and NoR: Overall ranking and event attractiveness.

Taking the Finn Masters as an example, the goal should be to attract 100 boats to a 470 Master's Cup. To this effect, it should be open as possible and in an attractive format that appeals to anyone who ever participated in a national championship. An overall ranking should be available, the number of categories reduced so that the medals have a value.

Recommendation

25) NoR should allow an overall ranking.

26) NoR and SI should indicate the minimum number of participants for a medal to be given in a particular category and how the categories are merged if this is not the case.

Approved by: Masters Committee, Alexa Betzel, Gildas Pouliquen, Max Pleger, Bob Austin.

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