

## Squib National Championships 2009

### Terms of Reference for the Rules Observer.

I was asked to be present at the Squib Class National Championships 2009. My role was twofold. To be the chairman of the Protest Committee and also to be present on the water during racing to observe the general standard of Rule Adherence by the Competitors whilst racing. I was also asked to be available should anyone want to have an explanation of the applicable rules following an incident that hadn't resulted in a Protest Hearing but had caused either one or more boats to require an explanation of the applicable rules.

### Observations from the Rules Observer during Racing

#### The Start(s)

Due to the long length of the Start Line so that all 108 boats can be accommodated on it there were inevitably a number of boats that got into trouble by crossing the Start Line early. Some of these were caught out by boats coming in from leeward and requiring them to head up into wind, and whilst heading up then crossed the Start Line. When under a Black Flag extra care needs to be taken during the last minute.

Starting at the Committee Boat end of the line, there is no "right" to round the Committee Boat and cross the Start Line, generally there were no issues and boats managed to escape without too much trouble, although several had to "bale out" and try again once the front rank of boats had started.

Generally, it was very difficult to judge where the Start Line lay during each start. There were large groups that seemed to want to start together, having formed into the groups, the second rank pushed the first either closer to or over the Start Line. From a competitors perspective if the committee boats don't have extremely tall masts or electronic devices are permitted there is no easy resolution to this. I did get a couple of Requests for Redress arising from the Start Sequence, these were dealt with in the Protest Room and the Decision was accepted.

There was a "Starboard / Port" incident after a General Recall. Boats were looking at the Committee Boat to determine if they had been identified as On Course Side during the last minute of the Start Sequence. Unfortunately the crews did not pay as much attention to any boats ahead of them as they did to looking for their number being displayed. I can't think of a better system that wouldn't involve cost to absolutely prevent this in future.

#### Beat to Mark One

I was not aware of any issues for Competitors whilst on the beat. Any Starboard / Port encounters were prevented from becoming trouble areas by early action. If the leg had become biased by a shift in wind direction and boats decided that it was better favoured to come in from the left side of the course they had to accept "ducking" a few to get around the mark. Some did this but I did observe a few that tried to push their luck and

attempt to invoke Rule 18 and claim Mark Room. Rule 18 does not apply at a windward mark when boats are on opposite tacks. However I did not have any protests submitted on this.

Mark One.

No real issues arose here, after the length of the beat the Fleet had separated to allow clear water between them. Most competitors took early action to ensure that as they approached Mark One they found a position to tack onto Starboard and round without issue. A couple of boats tried to “force” their way into a favourable position whilst on Port Tack. If you are in this position you should take action to “Give Way” to all Starboard tack boats, and not cause them to change course.

Along the Reach to Mark Two

There was the expected maneuvering for position amongst the Fleet and no conflicts were seen.

At Mark Two.

Generally the Three Boat Length Zone was not anticipated and therefore it seemed to be a surprise that a fellow competitor had an overlap on the inside at the Mark, this limited your options as the boat outside you also seemed to be unaware of boats overlapped inside them. There were some contacts between boats. “Protest” was not heard by me, Red Flags were not displayed, and no penalty turns were completed. Whilst appreciated that it is difficult to determine exactly where the Three Boat Length Zone starts, better awareness of those around on the approach to the Mark would prevent last moment surprises. Some incidents were seen here and I was pleased to see some boats sail clear of others and perform a two turn’s penalty.

Along the Reach to Mark Three

There was the expected maneuvering for position amongst the Fleet and no conflicts were seen. Judging the point at which boats entered the Three Length Zone caused some problems, with some being somewhat optimistic as to the start point and some failing to note the Three Boat Length Zone existed until they were alongside the mark if that early.

At Mark Three

This was the point where most trouble occurred. There was a compression of the Fleet, large numbers of Competitors arrived at the Mark together. Again few people seemed unaware of where the Three Boat Length Zone started, finding themselves caught out by a lack of wind as they approached the Mark. There were competitors carrying their way into Competitors that had slowed ahead of them. Many were reluctant to “Give Room” and even with boats alongside them on the inside headed up and caused contact between boats. There were no calls of “Protest” heard, only one Red Flag was seen and no turns

were completed. A few boats were seen to Scull whilst at the Mark in order to get away from the troubles and to change course. There were some boats that on leaving the Mark tacked onto Starboard seemingly without a thought of "Giving Room" to other boats to take avoiding action once the tack was completed.

From Mark One to Mark Three.

No trouble was seen, but when approaching the Leeward Mark smaller groups again rounded together. Again Boats seemed caught out by the Three Boat Length Zone. One boat was observed to look outside of his boat when starting to turn AT the Mark, on finding someone alongside him shout "No Water" and deliberately put his helm across causing immediate contact with another boat. Again neither boat called "Protest".

The Finish Line

I was not able to watch most competitors crossing the Finish Line. I thought that one boat did not cross the finish line leaving Mark One to Port and then passing outside the Committee Boat, this was confirmed by the Committee and reflected on the Results.

After the Finish.

Having completed their Race most Competitors crossed the Finish Line rounded the Finishing mark and raising their spinnakers to sail home. Many then sailed through their competitors still trying to get to the finish.

Matters arising after Racing.

There were six protests lodged following incidents during Racing. These were resolved in the Protest Room, There were no requests to re-open any of the Hearings. I was also approached by a number of Competitors during the course of the Championships to answer some questions they had about the rules, I was able to give them an explanation of how the Rule should be applied using different scenarios.

Conclusion.

Overall the level of Rule Adherence was good. There are two areas that need some thought and attention in preparation for a Championship of this size.

There needs to be some means of reducing the number of General Recalls. This is not easy to resolve but the time taken to set up for the next attempt is quite considerable for a Fleet of over one hundred boats. Each boat must have time to check if they have been identified as OCS and also to check any bias of the line. It would be worth thinking about the feasibility of running a Gate Start.

Rule 18 needs to have some attention paid to it. This can be done either, throughout the year by articles in the Class Newsletter, by notes being given in the Championship Welcome Pack, or by a presentation before the Practice Race of the Championship.

I was not empowered to take any action under Appendix P for Rule 42, and was pleased not to see any widespread breaches of Rule 42.

I hope that my service to the Championships has shown the value of having a qualified Judge at the Championships. I would encourage the Class to take the next step and allow any Judge on the Water to initiate Protests, Adjudication or Advisory Hearings based on what they have seen.