

## Clyde Yacht Clubs' Association and Handicapping

The overall role of the CYCA has evolved over the years. While overall boat ownership has probably never been higher, many factors have influenced the patterns of use – marina growth (perhaps at the expense of traditional clubs), social patterns affecting families' levels of participation, the "hot house" of elite dinghy squads, and maybe even the weather, to name but a few.

The consequence has been a level of retrenchment as far as keelboat racing is concerned. Many of those involved in today's fleet have been around for a long time – it's in the blood. Others have retired, at a rate in excess of the newcomers coming in, and many of the smaller types of boat still racing are happy to operate in their local "backyards". This is not unique to the Clyde – comments from various parts of the world reflect similar trends.

Nor is it to detract from the quality of the remaining fleets – but there can be no doubt that much of the earlier CYCA agenda in co-ordinating the Racing Calendar, managing Joint Entry Forms and common Sailing Instructions, plus maintaining series results and awarding overall prizes has fallen by the wayside. Not to mention the demise of Clyde Regatta.

The Association remains very much involved in representing the interests of the sailing community in its interactions with other maritime bodies, via the Clyde Moorings Committee, the River Clyde Safety Committee, and the Clyde Forum for example. And whilst RYA Scotland has been actively repositioning itself to address a broader spectrum of sailing community interests, the various Scottish regional sailing associations (including the CYCA) continue to provide a level of local knowledge and networking which are in the best interests of their respective members.

### Sail Numbers and Handicaps

What is possibly less well understood is the unique CYCA focus on sail numbers and handicaps – which between them constitute roughly half the income required to run the Association.

C-series sail numbers are internationally valid, and may be prefixed by "GBR" according to the owner's preference. This entitlement is long-standing and is formally recognised within the RYA Prescriptions to the Racing Rules of Sailing. Sail numbers are issued by the office – currently located within the Royal Northern & Clyde Yacht Club building in Rhu – and application forms can be obtained on request or from the CYCA website.

Handicaps are also issued, under the jurisdiction of the CYCA Handicap Committee, and applications should be made via the office, as above. A full list of current handicaps is posted to the CYCA website, updated after any significant changes and normally every week.

Approximately 25 clubs across Scotland also subscribe to the CYCA Handicap Manual process, which provides a hard-copy manual of handicaps at the start of each season along with regular updates (normally via email) throughout the sailing season.

### CYCA Handicapping

Handicapping is a sensitive subject! For those of a nervous disposition, it's maybe best to stick to one-design ...

There are basically two approaches: a "formula", which at first sight removes the nasty judgemental dimension; or an assessment subject to review, which introduces the need for a knowledgeable committee.

A formula, such as the one used to determine IRC handicaps, has the apparent attraction of eliminating judgements. Think for a moment longer, however, and you will realise that (a) there is judgement built into the construction of the formula, and (b) interesting sums of money can be spent in "designing around" the currently perceived punitive elements in the formula. The IRC formula is, however, widely used and favoured by many. Use of IRC ratings has grown significantly on the Clyde and in various other parts of the world. It's only fair to point out, however, that IRC is just "the latest" formula, various predecessor systems having come and gone over the years.

The CYCA system sets assessed handicaps – as does Portsmouth Yardstick which is run by the RYA and widely used by dinghy fleets.

A key requirement is for feedback. The RYA formalises this in its "YR2" process whereby club results may be formatted for inclusion in a growing database of class performances. From this database, statistical analyses can be conducted to identify PY numbers which are out-of-kilter, and the Primary Yardstick numbers, in particular, are generally accepted to be pretty fair.

The CYCA Handicap Committee seeks similar feedback from clubs, and a Winter Review meeting makes such changes as are perceived to be required. Club feedback is an essential component. Some computerised results packages provide built-in analysis features, which help to structure the data.

If your club conducts racing under CYCA Handicapping, please ensure 2007 feedback is provided as soon as possible.

What is a CYCA Handicap?

All handicaps are implemented as Time Correction Factors (TCFs), and – with the exception of pursuit races or average lap time races – elapsed times, from start gun to boat finish time, are converted to corrected time by multiplying by the TCF. The faster the boat the higher the TCF, and the smaller the corrected time the greater the prizes!

CYCA handicaps have traditionally been expressed as "Minutes per Hour", but these convert to TCFs using the formula  $(60-H)/60$ . So a handicap of 20 minutes per hour (eg Sonata) converts as  $(60-20)/60 = 0.667$ .

The advantage of even talking about minutes per hour that it provides A VERY APPROXIMATE way of knowing how far ahead or behind the opposition you should be to beat them. If your handicap is 15 min/hr and the opposition is 16 min/hr, then for every hour you have raced you need to be about a minute ahead of them to beat them. The actual arithmetic is more complex than this – see the table below for more detail, and a comprehensive table is on the CYCA website.

H'cap (min/hr)		10	14	18
	TCF	0.833	0.767	0.700
	Datum Corrected Time if 60 min elapsed for boat of this h'cap:	50.00	46.00	42.00
10		-	5.22	11.43
14		-4.80	-	5.71
18		-9.60	-5.22	-

(eg How far can I be behind the "fleet leader"? – pick the row corresponding to his handicap, then find the column corresponding to your handicap and multiply the number by the relationship between his elapsed time and 60 minutes. So if he is off 10 mins per hour and finished in 90 minutes, and you are off 14 min/hr, you need to be no more than  $5.52 \times 90/60$  minutes behind. Not exactly a 4 mins per hour difference, but in the same general zone!)

So How Does the Process Work?

The CYCA database contains "standard handicaps" for over 1,000 types of yacht. For some of these, years of results have resulted in fine-tuning and a high level of confidence that they are relatively accurate. For others, limited feedback has been received – they are in a category similar to PY "Secondary Yardsticks" ... a "best guess" made on the basis of similarity to other better-known types.

An Application Form should identify the Type, plus any "deviations from standard" for which allowances can be claimed – eg fixed blade propeller, furling sails, etc. Rig and sail measurements are also requested, although these are not necessary for relatively standard existing types.

There is a growing incidence of the same hull type having varying configurations – different mast and rig, different keel shape. These are dealt with by establishing a different base Type, and any allowances are awarded on top of the appropriate base handicap.

Approximately 50% of all applications are handled by the Association's administrator, Liz Redstone, using the database of standard components. The remaining 50% require Handicap Committee involvement. And ALL handicaps awarded are overseen by the Handicap Committee.

Considerable administrative time is saved via scanning of forms plus database facilities which include cross-reference to the Worldwide Web for validation of rig measurements. "Paperwork" is then exchanged across the Handicap Committee by email, and feedback is provided by Handicap Convener Bill Bower regarding new handicaps, revisions, appeals, and all non-standard activity.

Certificates are issued by the office, and can be sent via email if desired.

And it's a Smooth-running, Contention-free Operation?

Not exactly! It's impossible to run a handicapping system without contention. Of course you never hear from the people whose handicaps may be a little generous ... But the Appeals procedure gives owners the opportunity to challenge the Wise Men, and perhaps 50% of appeals result in the award of some handicap relief.

There is undoubted pressure towards increased complexity – owners' decisions to compete with less-than-maximum sail plans, for example, which may merit relief under IRC rating. But the CYCA system is a low cost system designed for Club Racing, and the Association is determined to avoid being dragged into excessive complexity or the need for the services of a measurer.

A £30 CYCA handicap lasts for the duration of an ownership, with no annual fees or measurer's charges. Modifications cost £10, replacement certificates are £5, and appeals are FREE.

Contacting the CYCA

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