



Observer Guidance

Notes

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Observers:

While on duty, an Observer is a member of the Race Committee

An Observer shall loudly hail and ONLY hail: -

- Boat to boat contacts
- Boat to mark contacts

Good Observers:

- Help the race committee to provide a top class event because they
 - Improve the rule observance of competitors
 - Improve the quality of independent evidence at protest hearings
 - Reduce the time taken for the protest committee to reach a decision

Observers have a big impact

- On the quality of racing and the event by
 - Knowing what they should be doing
 - Making clear and prompt calls of boat to boat and mark contacts
 - Understanding what they should not be doing

A Good Observer Will

The Observer's duty is limited to noting the facts. The only call to make is a call of "Contact" plus identification of the boat or boats involved using the correct hail procedure.

The observer shall **NOT**, at the time of the incident or afterwards -

- Decide whether a protest hail was correctly made
- Determine guilt
- Identify or advise on the relevant points of the Racing Rules of Sailing involved
- Call 'You have (not) sailed the correct course
- Call "Your Turn is incomplete"
- Suggest any action or remedy that the competitors should have taken or should now take.

Competitors want observers to be ...

- Diligent and concentrate on their section of the race
- As accurate as possible with regards the facts of the incident
- Timely but accurate with any calls they make
- To be totally impartial and call it as they see it, not as they think they see it
- Be capable of reporting the incident in a clear and concise way in any protest hearing.

Poor Observers

Competitors do not want observers who...

- Fail to turn up or be late on station
- Become so engrossed in the race and miss incidents
- Continuously talk to their mates and fail to watch their area of responsibility
- Are too timid to make calls or do not shout loud enough

A good observer will note

- Protest hails – Observers should hail loud enough so skippers can hear and repeat as necessary; when another skipper hails – what exactly was said and how long after the contact?
- They should try to note the situation prior to a contact or protest hail
- They should also try to note the situation at the time of contact
- Any responses to a protest hail
- Any Penalty turns and whether the turn was complete
- If any boat failed to sail the correct course

Observers need to make written reports from their recorded notes as soon as the heat/race has finished.

A good observer will note

- A good observer will determine which sector of the fleet he/she and other observers are to observe – front, middle or back?
- A good observer will always anticipate incidents, continuously track the boats under observation, and always know their current situation
 - Note which boat is on Starboard or Port
 - Note if boats are overlapped and if so which boat is windward and which is leeward, or which boats are clear ahead or clear astern. An observer will not always be certain of what he or she sees. For example, it can be difficult to know if an overlap was established in time, or whether a boat had passed head to wind.
 - Was the overlap obtained from clear astern and within two boat lengths?
 - Has either boat entered the four boat lengths zone?
 - Which boats if any were tacking, did they pass head to wind and did they assume a close-hauled course?

The observers' evidence, and the quality of that evidence, will be taken into account in any protest hearing and will contribute to the quality of the event.

A good observer applies the principle of the “last known certain situation”.

An observer must go back in time to the point when the facts were certain, and report that.

The issue is NOT one of deciding whether or not a boat has infringed a rule, either probably or beyond reasonable doubt, but of deciding whether a statement can be made with certainty.

An observer may

- An observer may give help to a competitor in the form of information freely available to all boats.

This reflects a recent change to the Racing Rules of Sailing and the MYA Standard Sailing Instructions and it seems that clarifying the course given on the Course board in response to a question from a competitor would be within the scope of this permission.

- Advising any competitor, whether he has asked or not, that he has not sailed the course correctly **IS NOT** within the scope of this permission.
- Finally, an Observer should not pass any opinion as it may be incorrect and have serious consequences during any subsequent protest hearing.