

Racing Rules of Sailing

Rationalisation of Sound Signal Requirements – Rules 26 and 29.1

A submission from the Malaysian Yachting Association

Purpose or Objective

To amend Rules 26 and 29.1.

Proposal 1

To remove the relief in the requirement to make a sound signal at the start.

26 STARTING RACES

Races shall be started by using the following signals. ~~Times shall be taken from the visual signals; the absence of a sound signal shall be disregarded~~

Current Position

As above. If the sound signal fails at the start of a race, the Race Committee is required to disregard the absence.

Reasons

The current wording has been the same for decades. It reflects a time when timepieces and sound signals were unreliable . Nowadays there is no excuse to have sound signals that are unreliable and might fail, thereby confusing sailors .

The rule envisages the failure of a sound signal, and says it 'shall be disregarded'. However there is no similar relief to the requirement for the sound signal accompanying an 'Individual recall' visual signal:

Proposal 2

29.1 Individual Recall

When at a boat's starting signal any part of her hull, crew or equipment is on the course side of the starting line or she must comply with rule 30.1, the race committee shall promptly display flag X with one sound signal **which shall be immediately after the start sound signal**.

Current Position

As above. Under the current rules, the two signals are not required to be consecutive . There needs to be two distinct signals .

Reasons

Imagine the failure of the sound signal accompanying the visual signal at the start, and then the recall sound signal being made for an individual recall . A boat starting close to the line at the pin end will hear only one sound signal, and is not in a position to see the X flag . It would be reasonable for that boat to assume she had started correctly. When scored after the race as OCS, she would be unlikely to be able to get redress as the rules require the RC to disregard the failure of the sound signal. (This happened in 2012 in the China Coast Regatta.)

Surely Race Committees nowadays are capable of preparing themselves with reliable sound sources. Gone are the days when Race Committees used canon and every tenth charge was a dud. At the start it is the second sound signal which prompts a sailor to look back at the flags of the RC boat, otherwise, its eyes forward . Just as a “protest” hail is important to give another boat a chance to exonerate, the individual recall horn must be distinctly recognised as a separate (second) sound from the start signal to give a boat a chance to start correctly

At the Korean Nationals 2012, there were two flag operators, one with the class flag and one with the X flag and each with their own horns . At the start, the class flag came down and simultaneously the X flag went up with each flag operator sounding their respective horns. The result was a single sound albeit two tone.

Proposal 3

The signal should be taken from the sound signal, not the visual signal . No one (least of all the Race Officer), is looking at the visual signals, so if the visual signal is early or late the Race Officer doesn't know.

You could argue that a sailor might not hear a sound signal but it is more true to say most sailors cannot see the visual signal . Imagine a good start with 60 boats lined up nicely close hauled on starboard tack just behind the line . Only one crew (at the committee boat end) can see the visual signal, and even for that one crew it takes quite a bit of twisting round . All of the others are blanketed.
