



Elite Racing Formats

David Campbell James





RYA National Race Officials Conference 2013

ELITE FORMATS
in the Olympic Classes

David Campbell-James



Stakeholders

- Sponsors
 - Team and Event sponsors, ISAF and IOC
- Media
- Spectators
- Sailors



Olympic History

- Athens 7 days, 7 races, 1 discard.
Winner of the Series wins
- Qingdao The first Medal Races
30 minute race
Series score carried forward
Double points in Final Race
- Weymouth A continuation of Qingdao
- Rio Where now?

From David Greening:

It greatly saddens me to read ISAF President Goran Petersson's Address (in Scuttlebutt 3716). His report of the Olympics focuses on Ticket Sales, TV Production and how ISAF Race Officials "blended in with local organisers". Surely ISAF should be more competitor-focused?

Weymouth should and could have been a great Olympic venue; since the sixties it was proposed as the preferred UK venue, because it could run multiple big Olympic courses with good wind and even tide away from the shore. Instead, in order to satisfy spectators and TV companies, the most critical races took less than 30 minutes and were raced with the windward mark right under the Nothe!

This Mickey Mouse racing was borne out with some pretty fluky outcomes, particularly in the Star Class and in the Women's Match Racing. No self-respecting One Design National Championship organizer would permit racing in the conditions that ISAF has allowed the pinnacle of sailing to denigrate to.

From Andy Green:

Concerning David Greening comments in Scuttlebutt 3717 about the Olympic Spectator Venue in Weymouth, when I'm racing I want the conditions shifty when I'm behind and steady when I'm ahead. But when I'm a spectator it is very different; I want to be entertained. I want to see sport and theatre unfold in front of me.

In Weymouth, I'm sorry for the sailors who lost out because the wind was too light, too shifty, or too whatever but I am happy for thousands of people who got to watch live sailing drama at its very best.

For those who were there on Super Sunday for the Finns and the Star medal races, the tension was electric. Sailor or non-sailor, everyone knew what was at stake, and it was big. We saw the heady highs of victory and the crushing lows of defeat. The crowd cheered, they cried and by the end of the day were emotionally exhausted. If you were there, you knew you'd seen something special and shared it with thousands, shoulder to shoulder, watching right there with you.

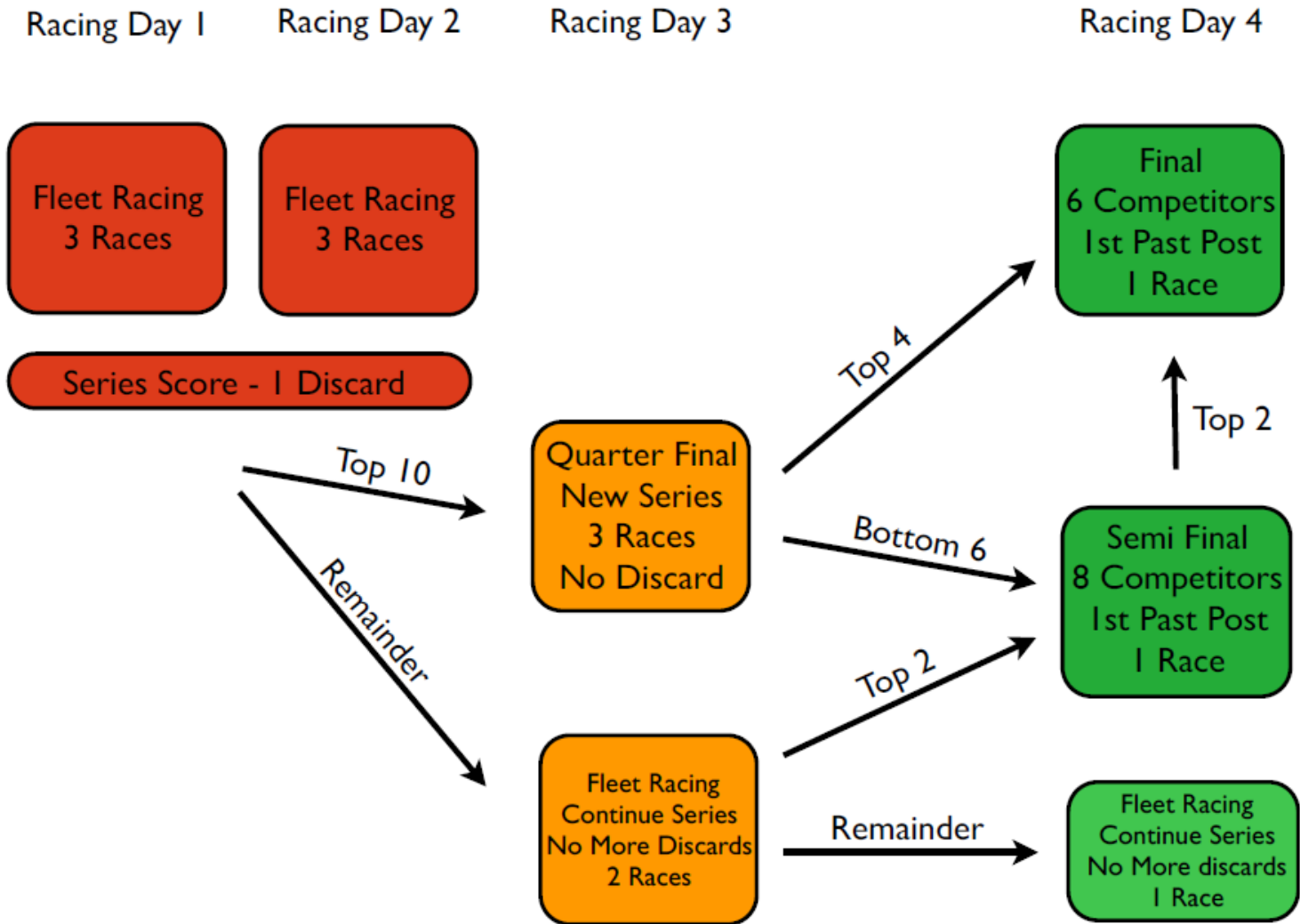
I'm not the judge of how 'fair' racecourses or venues should be (Qingdao anyone?) but I can tell you that by having sailing accessible to the public from on shore and simple to understand, the sport is engaging sometimes cynical current fans, building new fans, moving our sport into the 21st century, and ensuring its place in the future of the Olympics.



The Olympic Choices

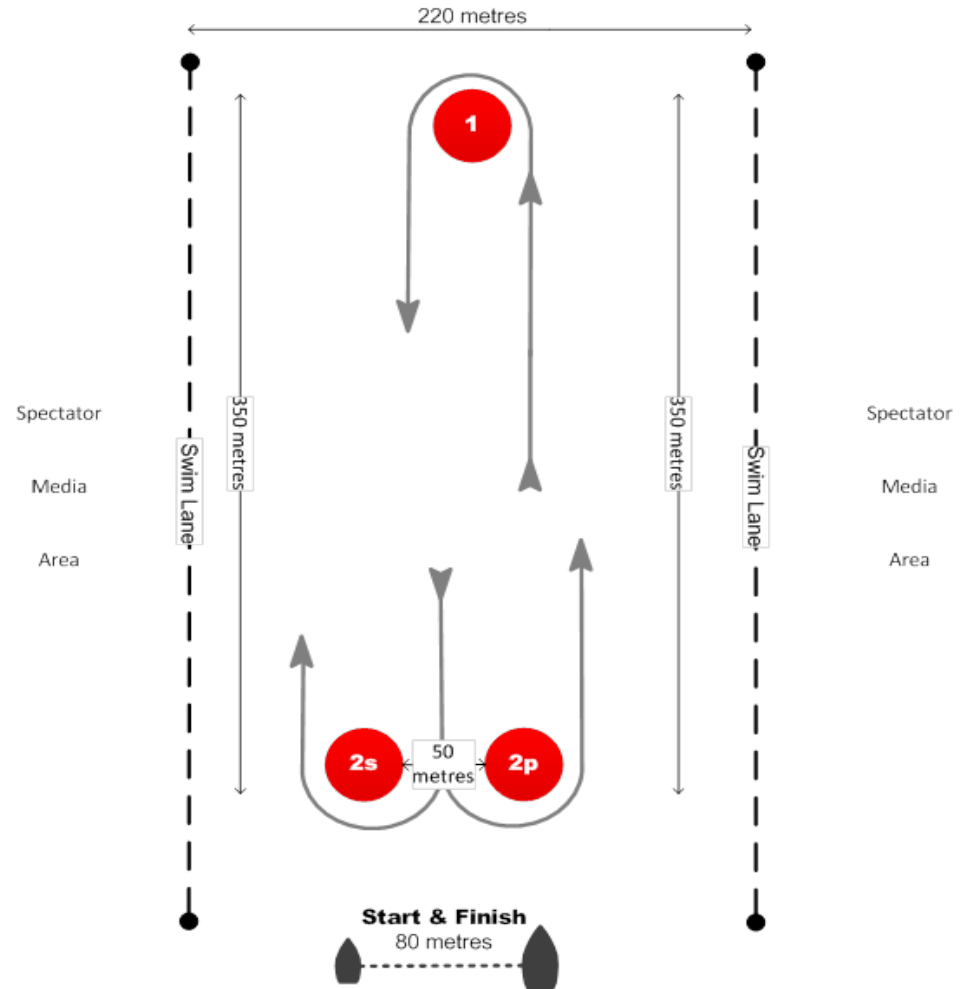
1. The Medal Race - stay as we are
Carry forward points from Fleet racing
Carry forward position from Fleet racing
2. First Past the Post
One race, Winner wins Gold medal
3. A combination of the above two choices
Percentage carried forward from Fleet racing against Final races

ATTACHMENT 1



- 8 Boats
- 6-8 minute races
- 2 or 3 laps
- On the water umpiring
- Short courses
- Restricted course width
- Spectator friendly
- Media friendly

L	COURSE: THEATRE RACING
Signal	Mark Rounding Order
L2	Start - 1 - 2s/2p - 1 - Finish
L3	Start - 1 - 2s/2p - 1 - 2s/2p - 1 - Finish



Theatre Style Day				
Overall	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
29	29			
28	28			
27	27			
26	26			
25	25			
24	24			
23	23			
22	22	Winner Round 1		
21		21		
20		20		
19		19		
18		18		
17		17		
16		16		
15		15	Winner Round 2	
14			14	
13			13	
12			12	
11			11	
10			10	
9			9	
8			8	Winner Round 3
7				7
6				6
5				5
4				4
3				3
2				2
1				1

Scoring

Fleet racing position	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Total points	Final position
1	3	1	4	9	2
2	2	2	2	8	1
3	1	4	3	11	3
4	5	5	6	20	4
5	4	8	8	25	7
6	8	3	5	22	6
7	7	6	1	21	5
8	6	7	7	28	8

Ben Ainslie Talks About Olympic Sailing

Extracts from a Talk at the World Yacht Racing Forum

The commercial side of sailing today is much more defined and developed than in the past. It has allowed sailors to source sponsorship and there is a growing realisation that top performers need financial support and government funding has also become a major part of every national sailing committee.

Plans have been developed, funding pathways created, rights organised, goals set and proper accountability practices put in place.

However commercialisation comes at a cost and it is vital that as a sport we appreciate the balance between developing a visually attractive sport while at the same time preserving the integrity of the racing. That's something that personally I think is absolutely crucial.

Much has been said about the medal race format at the Olympic regatta. The recent Games in London were a huge success. In Weymouth, the sailing event was fantastic on and off the water with final medal races in front of five or six thousand spectators on the Nothe providing some of the most exciting sailing we've ever seen.

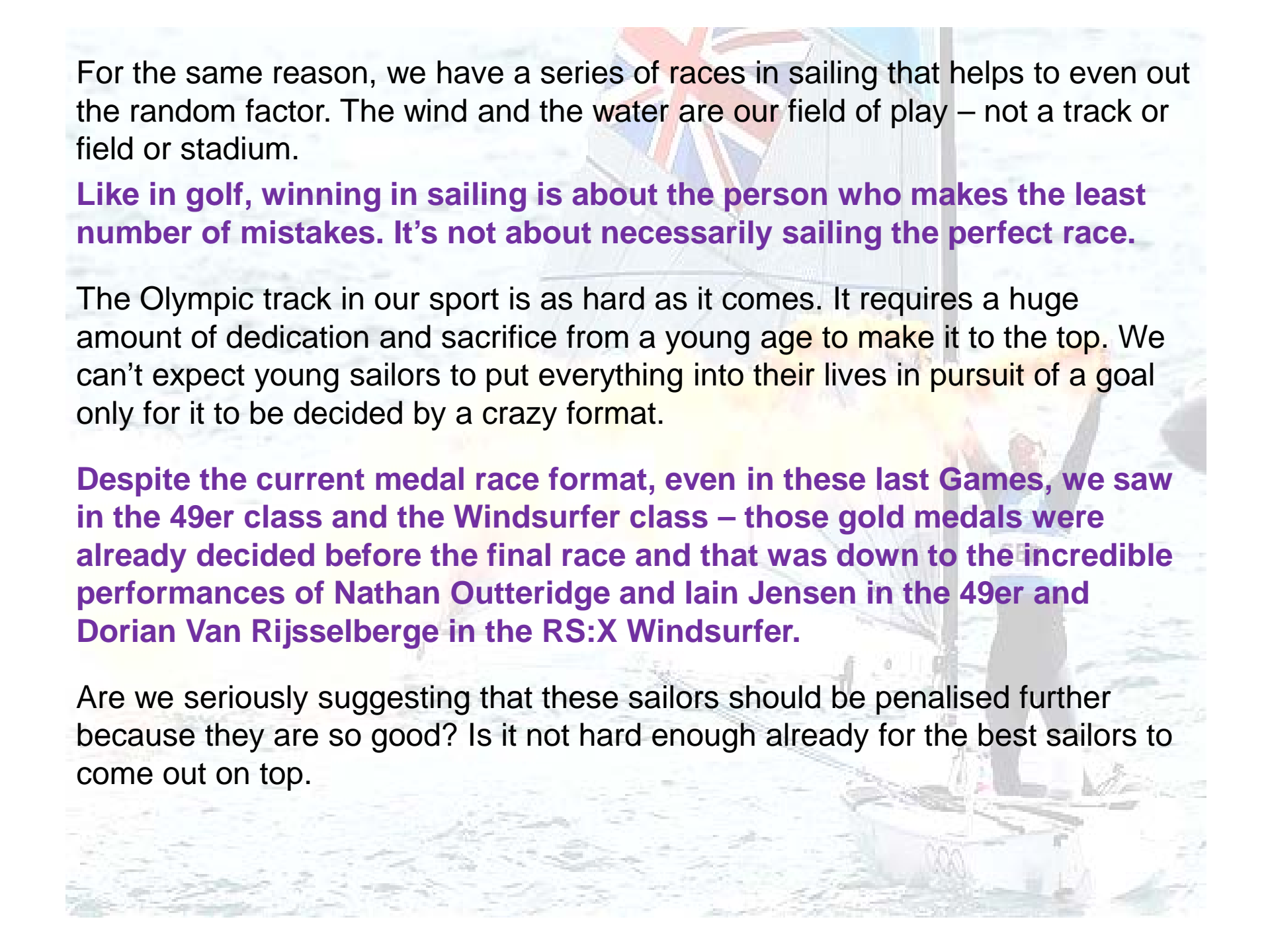
I think the fans onshore had a great time and as a competitor, you can see what it meant to everyone there racing. It was very special to hear and see such support. However you are probably not surprised to hear that the medal race format is not universally popular from the sailor's perspective. Why is that?

There has been a shift across sailing and particularly Olympic sailing over the last six years or so to maximising the importance of the final race and to increase the likelihood that the final race will decide the winners. Already, since this last Olympics there are some rather disturbing suggestions that in the future perhaps the medal race should be a winner takes all final race or perhaps even a series of medal races on that final day to establish the winners.

And I can't say to you enough today how wrong that would be.

Sailing is like golf. It has an element of randomness attached to it. I'm not going to call it luck, but maybe randomness is a better word.

Tiger Woods might be out there on the morning of the British Open playing six under par in perfect conditions and then the next afternoon Rory McIlroy might be out there having to play a round in thunderstorms and torrential conditions that we can often see in the UK. I guess that's why golf tournaments last for four days so that things can be evened out a bit.

A background image showing a sailor on a boat, likely a 49er or RS:X, with a Union Jack flag visible. The sailor is standing on the deck, and the boat is on the water. The image is slightly faded and serves as a backdrop for the text.

For the same reason, we have a series of races in sailing that helps to even out the random factor. The wind and the water are our field of play – not a track or field or stadium.

Like in golf, winning in sailing is about the person who makes the least number of mistakes. It's not about necessarily sailing the perfect race.

The Olympic track in our sport is as hard as it comes. It requires a huge amount of dedication and sacrifice from a young age to make it to the top. We can't expect young sailors to put everything into their lives in pursuit of a goal only for it to be decided by a crazy format.

Despite the current medal race format, even in these last Games, we saw in the 49er class and the Windsurfer class – those gold medals were already decided before the final race and that was down to the incredible performances of Nathan Outteridge and Iain Jensen in the 49er and Dorian Van Rijsselberge in the RS:X Windsurfer.

Are we seriously suggesting that these sailors should be penalised further because they are so good? Is it not hard enough already for the best sailors to come out on top.



To my mind, we have reached a cliff here in terms of maximising the importance of the final race and return for the benefit of the spectators and TV and if this trend continues then to my mind the integrity of the racing will be forever lost and I'm not sure if Olympic sailing will ever recover from that.

Olympic sailing is not the X-Games – it never has been and it never will be. What people want to see are the very best sailors competing at the highest level in the best boats with the best performers eventually coming out on top.

Are we seriously suggesting that these sailors should be penalised further because they are so good? Is it not hard enough already for the best sailors to come out on top.

And yes we want the final race to be exciting for viewers and spectators, but it is vital that we retain the integrity of the true sporting challenge.