

Abandoning a Match Race – Light or shifting winds

In match racing there is normally not an overall time limit for a race. This is because the last thing you want to do is to have to abandon a race that is a bit too long and then find you have no time to run another one. This means that when deciding whether to abandon a match race due to insufficient wind, there is no absolute measure. There are two different approaches to this problem.

Both approaches should be seen as an extension of match race call MR 27 that gives other criteria for abandoning.

Approach 1. Focus on Consistency

A match race should be abandoned when:

- (a) At the preparatory signal, either boat does not make enough progress to be able to fulfil the entry requirements,
- (b) In the pre-start, boats are unable to circle and maintain steerage,
- (c) On the first beat, either boat sails into the two-length zone around the windward mark without tacking after starting, or
- (d) Neither boat makes significant progress for two minutes.

The decision to abandon must be irrespective of the position of the match at the time. Even if one boat is ahead and the other has an outstanding penalty, the match must be abandoned if one of the above criteria is met. Otherwise the decision becomes; if Yellow wins the race will stand, but if Blue catches up we will abandon. The aim of the criteria is to reduce judgement in favour of consistency, and competitors have difficulties understanding that one match is abandoned while another match in the same conditions is not.

Approach 2. Focus on Judgement

The decision to abandon is solely the responsibility of the race committee; the umpires can suggest or recommend, but not decide. For the race committee, the criteria above are guidelines, and not directives or hard and fast rules. They must use discretion in the application of the criteria.

Abandonment must always reflect the fairness of the competition, so the longer a race continues, the less fair it is to abandon. Therefore, some of the criteria above are changing importance throughout a race. Criteria (d) is more applicable in the pre-start and on the first leg. It becomes less and less applicable on each succeeding leg.