

JUDGING WITH THE INTERNATIONAL MELGES 24 CLASS

For all International and National Judges attending a Melges 24 Class Event

Judging at a Melges 24 Event can be a rewarding experience but a both physically and mentally demanding one. You will be expected to be afloat in a fast RIB in all weather conditions taking an active part in the racing. You will not be able to sit at one mark and wait for the fleet to pass you. This will be a very tiring experience in heavy weather. The class is happy to protest and we have seen in excess of 60 hearings during an event. After a day afloat this can be mentally demanding.

The class expects a high profile and pro-active jury at its International and Continental events. The sailors expect to see you everywhere and actively taking decisions afloat and awarding penalties during the race as allowed in the sailing instructions. This requires a good knowledge of the class rules as well as the racing rules and an understanding of the way the boats are sailed and how the class works. Decisions afloat will have to be certain and taken quickly. The sailors expect them and you cannot afford to watch and do nothing.

Please be certain that you are happy to work under these conditions and willing to work with the class and its procedures. We would rather you declined the invitation than to be unhappy at the event because we expect you to be afloat in 30 knots or are asking you to undertake tasks you do not feel comfortable with.

The class operates both the yellow flag for rule 42 and the red flag/U Flag for class rule C.11 and all other RRS.

FLAGS FOR CLASS RULES AND RRS

It is not intended that the red flag and U flag should replace or diminish the self policing policy of the sport. However, it is another tool in the armoury of the judges which can solve a problem at the time and often control a problem before it becomes out of hand. The fleet includes sailors of all different levels and abilities and sadly there are a lot of sailors down the fleet who feel intimidated by those at the top. Often they do not feel confident enough to protest and to see a judge give a penalty gives them the confidence in their own abilities to protest next time.

THE RED FLAG

The red flag is used to give a two turns penalty for an infringement of the RRS or class rule C11 which controls the bowsprit and the boat's sailing method. The boat is whistled/

hailed and the flag shown and the penalty should be promptly taken. If the boat does not take its penalty then a protest should be lodged ashore against the boat. If there is doubt about the incident then it should be left for a boat against boat protest.

Whilst the rules regarding hiking are fairly clear the bowsprit use needs to be observed closely and these notes should help with an understanding.

LAUNCHING THE BOWSPRIT Class rule C.11.1 & 11.2

The class rules are phrased to try and ensure safe and fair sailing and that the bowsprit is not used illegally within the RRS.

Therefore the basic rule is: **NO spinnaker NO bowsprit.**

Once the boats have rounded mark 1 they may extend the bowsprit and hoist the spinnaker if the leg is broad enough. They **MUST NOT** launch the bowsprit and then sail across to mark 2 before they hoist.

When they hoist it should be – within reason- a smooth operation. Many boats hoist and launch the bowsprit simultaneously. If the bowsprit goes out first, watch that the crew is also pulling the spinnaker at least down the foredeck. It should not be necessary to launch the bowsprit any further away from mark 2 than 1 boat length.

RECOVERING THE BOWSPRIT Class rule C.11.3

This must be done at the first reasonable opportunity. Care needs to be taken when watching this as it can vary depending on which tack the boat takes from the gate. It is **essential** to watch the crew rather than the bowsprit. The bowsprit is cleated on the starboard side of the cabin and often the spinnaker must be cleared away before the bowsprit can be un-cleated.

Therefore, watch the crew. If it is clear that they are working hard to clear things away then you can judge that they are within “the first reasonable opportunity”. Beware also of the possibility of a jam. It can happen that the lines become jammed and watching the crew struggle may indicate this. Do not penalise this. If the crew is all sitting up on the deck and the bowsprit is still out then the rule has been broken.

The bowsprit must be capable of being retracted level with or aft of the stem head. It may not necessarily go this far back when retracted from the cockpit and can sometimes work its way forward. A small amount of bowsprit showing ahead of the stem does not necessarily break class rules, only if on further examination it was found that it could not retract far enough.

THE ‘U’ FLAG

When watching the race at different stages, particularly marks, it is difficult to see everything. At a gate, for example, you may be watching a situation unfolding at one mark when there is a commotion and shouts from the other. It is natural and right to look over and see what is happening. At this point you will only have seen the latter stages of

the incident and although you might have an idea what has happened you probably will not be able to make a call. However, the sailors will see you looking and may expect some response. This is when the U flag should be used. It sends the message that you have seen and acknowledged an incident has taken place but you have not seen enough to make a call and possibly give a red flag. You note what you have seen and expect a protest to be lodged ashore if no exoneration penalty is taken. You should of course follow this up when you are ashore.

THE GREEN FLAG

The green flag is not always used but we allow judges to carry and use it should they wish. It has been used by some judges who have found it useful on occasions to diffuse a situation when there is clearly no incident or rules broken but there is a lot of shouting. Obviously you must be certain that you have followed the boats in question and that no incident has occurred.

RULE 42 – RRS APPENDIX P

THE YELLOW FLAG

The class rules allow un-restricted trimming of the spinnaker, so under this flag you will mainly be looking at the mainsail and body movement of the crew.

Some crews move their body weight downwind and with care the movement is acceptable. However, some crews definitely ooch. Be on the look out for this.

Care must be taken when looking for mainsail pumping. All actions on a Melges 24 can be seen from a good distance away, but you must get close up to the boat to be certain. The mainsail can be very misleading. Some crews hold the mainsheet and it is clear that they are capable of – and do – pumping. However, it is often seen that the mainsail appears to be moving – pumped – but on moving closer the mainsheet is slack. In this case the boom rests on the spinnaker sheet and will bounce as the spinnaker is trimmed. From a distance this can be misleading and care must be taken.

There are no restrictions on where the mainsheet may be held.

We hope that these notes will help with judging at a Melges 24 event. Please be certain you are happy to work with the class and its wishes. We try to keep them updated and welcome feedback.

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