

Protocol for supporting B3 visually impaired sailor in main fleet

Background and purpose

IOCA's objectives include encouraging children to train and race in Optimists.

By implication at least, this objective encompasses all children.

IOCA already accept event entries from children with a range of medical issues.

IOCA have received an event entry for an existing Optimist sailor with a significant visual impairment (classification B3), but who has raced in a 2013 RYA zone championship and trained with a 2013/14 zone squad, and now wishes to compete with the rest of that squad in the main fleet at the 2014 Inland Championship.

This draft protocol sets out how IOCA might facilitate this.

Consultees

RYA zone squad coach and assistant coach

RYA Sailability racing coach (who is also an Oppy parent)

Sailor issues

Albinism and reduced visual acuity.

Principles of support

1. To allow sufficient additional support to mitigate the effect of the sailor's disability without extending this to provide any unfair advantage.
2. To do this in a way that is transparent to other sailors and their parents, and has the lowest possible impact on them.

Proposal

The sailor should be allowed to carry a VHF radio so that a "buddy" can pass information (observable facts) that other sailors would see for themselves, via a specified public channel separate from the safety and race management channels.

Issue	Provision	Restrictions	IOCA requirements
Sailor unable to see marks at a distance of c.50m	Buddy to communicate distance and direction (clock face) by VHF from a rib	Principle is to provide information (observable facts) but not judgements or tactical advice	Minor change to SI to allow the specified boat to receive suitable radio messages.
Sailor able to sail in company (including boats crossing on a beat) but loses direction if no other boats are nearby	Buddy to alert sailor and aim him back towards the bulk of the fleet		

Buddy needs to be able to identify the sailor without getting too close	Coloured circle near the peak of the sail	Rib must stay as far back as possible while maintaining visual contact.	None. Technical breach of class rules but confers no performance advantage
Additional rib in the course area – collision risk	Rib to display a distinctive flag	Buddy rib must not risk impeding other sailors. If that means losing visual contact, alert the sailor (who may then be safer on starboard tack if possible?)	Allow specific exemption from the wider restrictions on support ribs.
Collision risk – sailor. In certain conditions, may be less able to accurately assess collision risks.	Bow bumper, initially at least.		None
Perception of buddy rib having better information for the other sailors they are supporting		Any benefit offset by reduced time with their other sailors due to the need to support this sailor to the finishing line.	None
Risk that sailor may hold up proceedings	None.	The normal W-flag provision is available, and the RO will not wait specially for this sailor.	None
Concern that the support given could go past mitigating information and become an unfair advantage		Use of a specified public VHF channel that anyone can listen in to.	None
Nearby boats may hear information over sailor's VHF		Any such information should be nothing that they can't see for themselves	None
Potential impact on other sailors' ranking		Not significantly different to the impact from other inexperienced sailors in main fleet for the first time	Address as part of the "new to main fleet" additional briefing

Examples of acceptable and unacceptable messages (we may need or be able to refine this guidance over time in the light of experience)	
Acceptable (observable facts and safety)	Unacceptable (tactics and judgement)
Relative position of the next mark (2 o'clock, 150m)	On the lay line
You are (nearly) the farthest out [from the rhumb line]	
Relative position of the gate or the nearer gate mark	Which buoy to round
Call starboard	
Give-way collision risk	
Big gust coming	
You are on the black flag list	

Jay Williamson
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28th April 2014