

Some good problems to have

2014 looks to have been a good year for ORC. The figures on certificate numbers through the third quarter are up by over 500, and may by the year end break through the 9,000 mark for the first time ever. Why is this happening?

It's difficult to give generalised reasons for this success, because within the 40-some countries that use ORC Club and ORCi rating systems there are local effects driving the gains or losses in popularity. But it's hard to ignore the popularity of ORC events as having a significant effect on the numbers.

In the Baltic region, for example, the number of ORC Club certificates remained about the same, but the huge 150-boat turnout for the ORC World Championship in Kiel created a spike in ORCi certificate numbers throughout the northern European countries. Denmark created a whole new ORCi fleet this year, sending almost a dozen boats to compete in Kiel, in addition to building a local fleet for future ORCi events.

In fact, there were teams competing in Kiel from countries who were not even in the statistics because their certificates

upcoming annual general meeting in Palma there are submissions to debate important questions like: should there be limitations to classes, or can everyone come to the party? Should class splits be defined by ORC well in advance, or should the complexion of the entry fleet alone be used to determine suitable splits? Even within the limited time formats of the event, should more time be devoted to longer offshore races? If so, how can this be done for a wide range of boat sizes and types?

Other important discussion topics at the AGM will be related to ISAF submissions. This includes gathering support for the revival of a dormant level-rating class to allow for racing under corrected time, and how to kill the ISAF Executive Committee submission to get rid of Sailor Classification.

While not perfect, classification is an important system used at all major ORC events to define eligibility for Corinthian Class trophies that recognise and reward all-amateur racing. Many entries at ORC regattas are eligible for this award, and their crew members go through the sometimes complex process of evaluation to be rated as Group 1s in order to race for this trophy. The system is thus an important contributing factor to the proven success of recent ORC regattas, and ORC's support for the defeat of this measure conforms closely with numerous other international classes and events who wish to see this proposal defeated.

One subject area that is likely not to see much debate is any changes to the ORC VPP for 2015. The International Technical Committee (ITC) this year started out with a modest research agenda to be pursued by its talented group of designers and research technicians, but within a few months the AC programmes started knocking on their doors for help, and some key members have heeded the call. Led by chairman Alessandro Nazareth, the ITC was therefore unable to make much headway on the year's research agenda, although stronger ties to the Sailing Yacht Research Foundation will change that in the coming year.

The good news is that the close race results among a broad variety of boat types in the year's ORC events indicated the VPP as it is now is working pretty well and is therefore not in need of any major revisions. Nazareth will nevertheless have had one more meeting of his group in Southampton before the AGM to address a small handful of inquiries related to minor performance, measurement and technical issues, and where it recommends the management consider setting any proposed class splits.

Another interesting surprise came from the application of ORC ratings in the fleets of high-performance Class Libera-style boats on Lake Garda. In the classic regattas of Trofeo Gorla and Centomiglia, a race up and down Lake Garda that was this year in its 64th edition, the fleets were traditionally split into several classes of One Design, or 'Libera' groups racing boat for boat. This year the organising club, Circolo Vela Gargnano, replaced many of them with two large ORC groups, which led to 90 boats in Trofeo Gorla, and 70 in the Centomiglia.

The 2014 Trofeo Gorla was won by the Felci-designed *Bravissima*, and the Centomiglia by the Swiss Farr 11 *Sonnenkoning*, with the new Felci-designed *Mataran* (see last month) in second place. The ORC fleet included a vast variety of boats, ranging from extreme lake boats to more classic older racer-cruisers.

Managed by ORC chief measurer Nicola Sironi, this format has also been adopted on Lake Como with a circuit of races that started back in April. This is a very interesting development in terms of the application of the ORC system to this style of boats, and bodes well for fair rating in the future at events on these and perhaps many other lakes.

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Challenges for the rating services don't come much greater than in the case of the Jo Richards-designed Italian lake racer *Stravaganza*. After her major refit (*Seahorse* May 2014) *Stravaganza* has enjoyed a much 'faster' season in 2014

were issued locally in Germany by the Deutscher Segler Verband (DSV) rating office. Examples include Christopher Opielok's John Corby-designed 38-footer *Rockall IV* from Hong Kong and a new XP-38 bound for the USA, Andrew Holdsworth's *Extreme Ways*... Neither country has an ORC rating office, yet these teams found a way to get measured and rated in order to attend.

To a similar degree the increase in certificates in Spain may have also been due to the European Championship being held in Valencia during Trofeo la Reina. But the Copa del Rey, Palma Vela and other major events in Spain now offering ORC scoring have also contributed, together with the transition to ORC from local systems used on the Iberian peninsula. The 2015 world championship in late June being held in Barcelona will only continue this trend, since the organisers at the Real Club Náutico de Barcelona are confident of a strong 140+ entry next year.

Likewise, the Baltic fleet is also likely to grow in the eastern regions next year as the European Championship in Parnu, Estonia ramps up towards its expected turnout of 80 boats in mid-August. And active bids to ORC from organisers in Copenhagen for the 2016 worlds, in Trieste and Palma for the 2016 Europeans, and even a bid from Holland for the worlds as far off as 2018 indicate a strong desire from organisers interested in taking their turn to play host to these large international events.

As discussed in the October issue, while these large fleet sizes are an encouraging indication of the popularity of the rating system, they can also present problems in finding the right balance between popularity and quality in race management. At the