

Deciding your champions

With both ORC's main championships – Europeans and Worlds – held this year within weeks of each other, members of the technical team were kept quite busy handling over 200 entries across the two events... The effort is exhausting but necessary to meet the standards enshrined in the Green Book, a document with roots that go back to IOR days. Ask anyone who raced the Admiral's Cup 'back in the day' and they'll know all about the strictures of the Green Book and the rigorous efforts made to enforce them.

Fast forward to 2016 and the Green Book remains very much alive in ORC, giving guidance to organisers on what is expected to host a high-level event. It thus acts as a de facto contract between ORC and local organisers. Published standards also help venues bidding for events to know just what is expected.

Published benchmarks are important, but ORC has in turn been gradually shifting these standards in response to what sailors and organisers want to see in a championship that is supposed to test inshore and offshore prowess. The challenge is to do this within parameters acceptable to all parties, which can vary greatly by culture and location. What may surprise many, for example, is that much of the Baltic region now seems to have developed the

Take Porto Carras, Greece: the site of this year's Europeans is not in a part of Greece that sees the booming Meltemi winds that lash the islands further south in the Aegean. Here in summer a pleasant afternoon thermal arises around noon and dies with the setting sun. So two short offshore races are the obvious choice if the championship format is to be met.

The predicted weather for the 2016 worlds in Copenhagen was less certain, but organisers were still reluctant to commit to a long offshore option. In spite of setting just 26nm courses – no longer than a coastal sprint – only B and C classes finished the two designated offshore races and Class A had to sacrifice an inshore racing day to do its similarly brief 30-miler.

In neither event did the wind nor the waves reach sufficient strength to get anyone wet, so hardly a rigorous offshore test. But in Denmark this could easily have been a week of cold, windy and rainy weather... instead, we got sunburn.

Another important element to these championships is adhering to the complexity of the rules, and at both events measurers and jury were kept busy. Controls were made for the top boats in each class on sails, crew weight and freeboards (to calculate displacement) plus inclinations (to determine stability).

Only a few errors were detected outside measurement tolerances – plus one potentially much more serious measurement 'issue' that is still being investigated. With regular infractions ORC rules prescribe penalties for how juries need to handle these cases, so even with the large fleet in Copenhagen the nights were not too long before decisions were made.

How to deal with the much larger 'discrepancies', like that suspected at this year's Europeans, is less a matter for the measurers...

There is, however, one important aspect of ORC championships that could be vastly improved: scoring. In an era when all manner of information is easily funnelled to your smartphone, ORC still lacks a web-based tool for its chosen method for inshore scoring: Performance Curve Scoring. Elapsed time data is still manually logged and transmitted to the scorer, who then needs to enter that data into the scoring program for calculation.

This process was very fast at the Europeans, because the scorer was

ORC programmer Panayotis Papapostolou and results were announced between races on the VHF. However, the intermediate step of uploading online was still needed, and in Copenhagen this often took hours after racing.

Another important feature is tracking – commonplace at most other big offshore events but the added cost still makes some organisers hesitate. Mobile app-based trackers, like raceQs, are now available at no cost, but require local network coverage. Perhaps the new pan-European standard for data roaming will help allow this to become a new Green Book standard?

Regardless of what's in the future, congratulations are in order for three new ORC world champions: Vadim Yakimenko's TP52 *Freccia Rossa* and his all-French crew in Class A; Norwegian Claus Landmark on his Mills-designed Landmark (sic) 43 *Santa*; and Jascha Bach's new Italia 9.98 *Bachyachting*... This is the third year in a row for the Class A winner and the second for the pretty Matteo Polli-designed Italia 9.98.

Doobs Davis



Betraying its IMS roots the super-slender and much refined and optimised Grand Soleil 42R of tireless racing enthusiast – and local skipper – George Andreadis finished second in the combined classes A and B at the ORC Europeans in Thessaloniki. Of interest is that in spite of being a fleet of mainly production boats, only 14 of 37 entries in class AB were Corinthian

same distaste for long offshore races that is usually associated with more southern cultures...

In ORC championships the offshore element should currently be either one long race of 30-36 hours – including a scoring gate to create two scored races – or two shorter races of 10-12 hours. A minimum of four inshore and one offshore races is needed for a valid championship, and if seven races are completed one may be discarded, which can be an offshore race if two are completed.

Some observers (not participants) have criticised the format as too easy for a championship of an organisation called the Offshore Racing Congress, yet take a moment to consider these facts: first, the venues used, often driven by fleet concentrations, may be in places not known for reliable winds (but then how often are reliable wind venues reliable...). Second, this format reflects what ORC participants seem to want within the six days available for racing; with a trend in ORC fleets towards less and not more offshore sailing, it is the ORC itself that has had to try to live up to its moniker while allowing flexibility for factors like the weather.