

Justice prevails

A long and sad chapter in ORC championship history is finally over, now that an International Jury convened at the Yacht Club of Greece has pronounced a guilty verdict on the Italian Scugnizza team for their actions at the 2016 ORC European Championship.

This decision did not come easily, and was only made after a thorough investigation followed by two days of hearings, with expert witnesses and lawyers on all sides, and another full day of deliberation among the five jury members.

The final decision was definitive: the boat (and owner) was 'in breach of rule 69.1 (a) in that he committed gross misconduct by committing a gross breach of a rule, a breach of good sportsmanship and by bringing the sport into disrepute. The rules broken were RRS 2, 78.1 and ORC Rating System 2016 304.3a, all of which were broken deliberately'.

The decision was also referred to the Italian federation (FIV), who have the power to take further corrective action.

At issue were ballast tanks found to be glassed in under the 38-footer's cockpit which were filled to affect extreme stem-down trim for measurement. At the event the measurers confirmed the boat was in this trim in accordance with its certificate, but did not find the tanks which were disguised by the wheel well. However, the same boat was repeatedly photographed racing in level trim.

ORC did numerous calculations to demonstrate the volume of water needed to get to this unusual measurement trim, and how it was not possible to achieve this without additional undeclared ballast. Scugnizza tried – intriguingly – to claim they could achieve level sailing trim by placing items such as anchors in the forepeak while racing... but even the weight of these items in this position was insufficient to put the boat in level trim for racing.

Since Scugnizza was disqualified from all races in last year's Europeans a new winner is declared: Alvar Tuulberg's Arcona 34 *Katarina II* from Estonia has been elevated from runner-up to being the new 2016 ORC Class C European Champion.

Tuulberg himself has already moved on, putting a new hull and appendage package under the deck of his other *Katarina*, a Cossutti designed Next 37, although right now he's still entered in both the

2017 worlds in Trieste and the 2017 Europeans in Gdansk with his original – now champion – Arcona 34.

A site tour of the Europeans venue in Gdansk looks promising: this historical city with Hanseatic roots lies on the south shore of a large bay that will easily handle the two course areas used for inshore racing. What's especially encouraging is that there is a solid number of larger and faster designs to make a respectably sized Class A – in the last two European championships classes A and B had to be combined and scored as one class.

To help build a base of measurers in the region ORC conducted a measurement seminar in early April, although the event also attracted trainees from throughout eastern Europe, Russia and even Korea. This is a really important component to the success of the system: trained and qualified measurers and rating officers. ORC programmer Panayotis Papapostolou has developed and is now offering a new PC-based scoring software package, which is being encouraged for use in any regatta using the ORC system, but especially for championship events.

And lastly it's worth reporting on the continued progress of the ORC Superyacht system, in its third winter of use in the Caribbean by an extremely diverse field of boat types. A total of 49 certificates have been issued so far among new yachts or renewals in the categories fully measured (25), declared (21) or the new Corinthian Spirit class (4) introduced this year.

The first event of the season saw 11 yachts entering the Antigua Super Yacht Challenge, followed by the Rolex Swan Caribbean Cup and the Loro Piana Super Yacht Caribbean Regatta & Rendezvous in Virgin Gorda. As usual the St Bart's Bucket Regatta had the biggest entry with 32 superyachts in five classes including the newly born Corinthian Spirit class with four boats.

Several ORC representatives were on hand to assist, providing technical support before, during and after racing. A detailed analysis of the data acquired during these 2017 events is already underway and some further VPP adjustment looks possible as this summer's European events get started.

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When IRC first came to life as the Channel Handicap System (CHS) everyone accepted that a degree of pragmatism would initially be needed to reasonably rate a wide variety of boat types without resorting to off-putting amounts of inevitably underperforming maths and complex and expensive measurement. The same approach underpins the success of the ORC Superyacht rule which – as seen here in St Bart's – now has to accommodate an extraordinary range of sail-powered vessels, handicapping them on the basis of some decent underlying science, a healthy dose of results-led adjustment and finally a pinch of gut instinct on the part of rating managers