

## Getting (the customer) back in the mix

Too often the functionality of a rating system will remain mired in endless detail, leaving the end-users lost in the rule, its procedures, terminology and concepts. Even measurers and designers can frequently become bogged down in these details and lose sight of what sensitivity the various parameters have to rating and how they may also affect each other.

Relying as it does on the International Measurement System (IMS), refined over three decades but still seemingly complex in measurement scrutiny compared to other rules, the ORC rating system can thus also appear complex and unapproachable. Any exploration of the rating rule would appear to require the help of a designer with access to and knowledge of the designer version VPP issued each year by ORC, or at least the help of a measurer to run test certificates. The rule has therefore been available, but hardly transparent, to all but the experts. And not inexpensive for non-experts to pursue their own enquiries on possible changes.

But now ORC is offering a powerful new service: a do-it-yourself web-based system to generate self-serve test certificates.

- Acquire a copy of any ORC certificate issued from 2009 to date.

(The latest date on which any boat entry has been modified – not trialled – is also listed for competitor or client access.)

Based upon an existing ORC certificate a user can easily and swiftly trial edit all of the general parameters such as:

- crew weight
- construction features (hull and appendages)
- freeboards
- propeller type and diameter
- righting moment changes (to be added from spring 2011)

Rig parameters can also be amended or played around with, including:

- spar section measurements
- mast weight and CG
- rig details and features such as numbers of spreaders
- all of the sail measurements can also be explored at will...

Among the useful features of the new service once changes have been made to the rig or sail plan is to output a scale drawing to verify the proportions and detect obvious input errors (this is the same drawing that will subsequently appear on the certificate). Once the adjusted file is considered to be acceptable a request is then made to have an ORC Club or ORCi test certificate generated to the My Boats page.

Because this service is new and still evolving, use of it comes with some caveats... Firstly, it is possible that in the coming months there will be VPP releases to include fixes by the ORC programmers. These releases are part of the normal ORC process to refine the accuracy of a VPP as it is tested among users and feedback is produced. These can result in small changes in rating until the final version of the VPP is accepted.

However, for the running of test certificates it's worth noting that new tests are always automatically recalculated with the most current VPP

software to ensure users are getting the most up-to-date rating.

Test certificates and certificate copies are offered using a credit-based accounting system. Currently test certificates and copies are priced at 10 credits each, where each credit is equivalent to one euro (paid using PayPal).

While this new tool may invite comparisons with the old user-friendly IOR system, where simple parameter changes were easily calculated by both designer and sailing crew, it is important to note that this new ORC service does not have the full range of functions possible through a rating office, such as changes to the offset files themselves. And only a national rating office or the ORC itself can issue certificates that are valid for racing.

Nevertheless, acceptance and use of this new Sailor Service have already been encouraging, with more than 500 uses in the first week after it was unveiled. People like to explore. Always have, always will.

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**Having fun! Audi MedCup regular and two-time Tornado Olympic bronze medallist Santiago Lange took some time out in early January to crew for his son Klaus at home in Mar del Plata, Argentina at a spectacular 29er world championship – the pair finished 19th overall in a fleet of 60**

The brainchild of ORC programmer Panayotis Papapostolou, Sailor Services is a new feature on the main ORC website that gives boat owners and other interested parties an opportunity to perform any of the following tasks:

- Search the online database to access any ORC Club or ORCi certificate issued by any rating office since 2009; this database now contains certificates from around 6,500 yachts worldwide and is continually being updated.
- Maintain a personalised suite of certificate data as 'My Boats' to be reviewed and edited as needed.
- Generate an ORC Club or ORCi test certificate using current ORC VPP software, using either existing measurement data or by tweaking individual measurements as required. Once a test certificate is calculated, the boat's GPH figure appears in the table and a pdf of the test certificate is available for download.
- Examine each new rating generated for a boat using the latest version of the VPP programme.