

Easy access

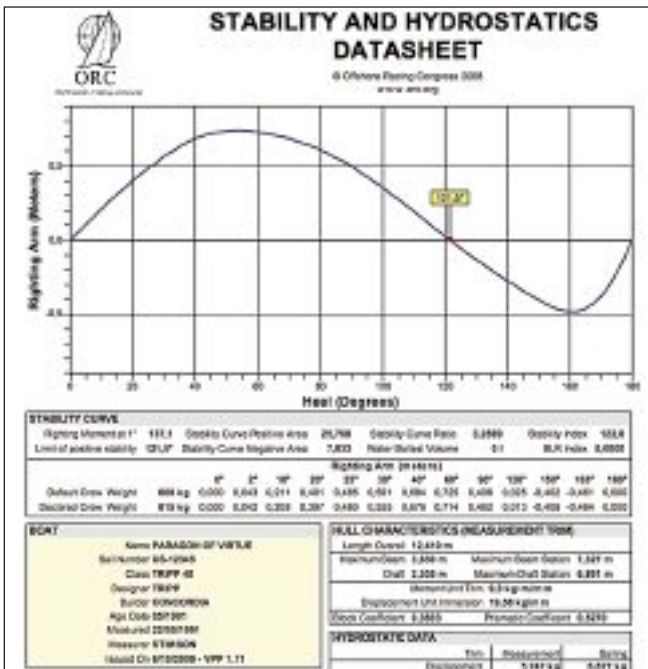
Starting in late 2010, ORC programmer Panayotis Papastolou embarked on an ambitious project: take more than 20 years of accumulated measurement data from past IMS and ORC certificates and make it accessible in a format that is web-based and does not require the software tools previously reserved for designers and rating offices. Working from all those old text files that for years were used to generate all those columns of obscure abbreviations and figures on IMS certificates, Papastolou was able to mine them for the IMS measurement parameters that have remained largely unchanged, thus making this older data readable in current formats. This not only allows the old measurement data to become accessible, it also means that new ORC test certificates can be run on them using the latest ORC VPP.

This capability must represent some sort of a breakthrough in the annals of handicapping: over 55,000 measurement records from thousands of custom and production designs that were all uploaded to the ORC central database are now accessible online. And the number is constantly increasing, as ORC's Sailor Services database is being enriched by new certificates as they are issued; if an IMS, ORC Club or ORC International certificate were ever run on a boat, then it's likely that it will be found on the system (see below) simply by using the search function.

Moreover, Papastolou programmed in another handy feature: the ability to edit this old measurement data (except for hull and appendages) and then run a new test certificate. This would be useful for those wanting to compare against past ratings where changes are made to commonly changed parameters.

Because the hull and appendage offset file is not accessible (this is proprietary information secure between ORC and the designer), and even though major changes in weight or righting moment can be inputted using the editor, actual changes should still really be vetted through a designer for accuracy. Rating offices do now also have the tools to alter offset files, through an updated version of ORC's Rating Manager software.

While any ORC Club and ORC certificate that has been run from 2009 to the present is available for download for free, to run a new test certificate costs



a measly 10 euros per test (a bulk buy discount is available!).

Moreover, users can now run an unlimited number of test certificates, because anyone serious about exploring the effect of measured parameters on rating can download the Designer Version software (the so-called DVP) for 500 euros and with the appropriate knowledge can then undertake their own tests.

The output of the tests from this DVP version is the same as in a test certificate, but in a different designer-oriented format. (An important caveat is that the DVP addresses the needs of designers, who create their own offset files, whereas Sailor Services allows the use of existing offset files by a broader public without violating the designers' intellectual property.)

Once a test certificate is run, other ORC products then become available. The ORC Speed Guide is a package of polar performance data that collates in both tabular and graphical form theoretically predicted boat speed for any boat having an ORC International or Club certificate. The boat velocity data is provided for a range of true wind speeds (6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 20kt) and true wind angles, including optimal upwind and downwind VMG angles, and using all possible sail combinations.

Another ORC product that becomes available is the Stability and Hydrostatics Datasheet (below left), a report that offers valuable stability data relevant for event organisers to determine stability characteristics. Using measurement data taken from ORC certificates, this datasheet displays stability information such as the Righting Arm Curve and the Stability Index calculation, and how they relate to the requirements of the Offshore Special Regulations.

Hydrostatic data is also provided for displacement, length of waterline and overhangs, wetted surface area, longitudinal centres of buoyancy and flotation, with all data calculated for both measurement and sailing trim. Usefully, an additional Righting Arm Curve is also given for water-ballast and canting-keel configurations.

There was some initial concern from rating offices that so much transparency would bypass their own traditional roles servicing the needs of ORC constituencies. However, ORC sees this as merely a supplement to services already offered by rating offices, and thus helps insulate them from the many speculative inquiries that could easily be answered with just such an online query system (ORC also returns a rebate to rating offices from any income made on Sailor Services in their own country).

So far the system has been a success: in the first months since its introduction around 8,000 users from 32 countries have used it to access certificates and run tests. This number is expected to increase dramatically now that the system's explanatory texts are being translated into all the major languages.

Besides its use for owners and boat managers there are several other uses for Sailor Services:

- Race organisers can now have ready (and free) access to issued certificates where they have not been provided by competitors.
- The analytically minded can do some sniffing around for more info on their competition.
- Designers who don't want to dive into the DVP software can use it as a quick reference guide.
- Brokers and buyers can use it to find important measurement, design and build information on listed boats, as well as to predict how older boats would now rate.
- Local empirical handicappers will now have a more objective benchmark against which to base their ratings.
- And those who are just curious about how some older boats were set up in their prime can also hunt down the data they crave (hear that, Ton-class enthusiasts!).

In his usual enthusiastic style, legendary American boatbuilder Barry Carroll recently described Sailor Services as being like 'pornography for those interested in handicap sailing'. There's no greater praise.

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