

It's been a good year

This last column of the year falls during preparations for the ORC's Annual General Meeting, a time when ORC uses its committee structure to assess its rating system and its performance over the past year, and to develop strategies on how best to improve the system for the coming year. To go forward effectively it's best to look back and see not only what went wrong, but what went right.

In this regard, the 2013 report card reads rather well:

(1) Worldwide certificates: ORC seems to be gaining in popularity around the world, because fleet statistics show substantial gains over last year. At the end of the third quarter there were 5,966 ORC Club and 2,269 ORCi certificates issued by the 35 ORC rating offices around the world, representing a whopping 24% increase in Club and a more modest 3% increase in ORCi certificates. And



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Coming through... the TP52 *Beecom* comes screaming through a big Melges 24 fleet at this year's San Francisco Big Boat Series. This year's series saw the west coast debut of an HPR division

there is still the southern hemisphere season yet to begin before the close of the year... this typically increases ORCi numbers.

(2) New countries: The large increase in Club certificates comes primarily from the adoption of the ORC VPP for use with the large NORLYS fleet in Norway, but certificates were also issued for the first time in China, Montenegro and Hungary. Also, a small but competitive fleet of ORCi-rated boats has been established in Denmark, poised to participate in various regattas throughout the western Baltic. There has also been a resurgence of ORCi use in Spain at major events such as the Copa del Rey.

(3) Events: The Adria Ferries ORCi world championship in Ancona, Italy continued a three-year trend, attracting an entry-limited 100 boats from 11 countries. The Avantage European Championship also produced the strongest turnout in over a decade, with 60 teams from eight countries racing in Sandhamn, Sweden, double the number of participants seen in recent years. For the first time there were three classes rather than two, allowing a better quality of racing among more like-styled boats. In both events the

winners were the best-prepared and best-sailed teams in competitive classes composed of a mix of racing and cruiser/racer-style designs, and not those having any rating gimmicks to cheat the rule.

(4) VPP performance: As discussed in this column in the October issue, results in races this year were more in line with observations than those seen in previous years. This helps validate the hydro and aero model improvements made to the 2013 VPP through CFD research by the International Technical Committee (ITC).

(5) A deal was struck with US Sailing to help in the development and administration of HPR, starting a process to rebuild a relationship with ORC that has deep historical roots. Jim Schmicker from Farr Yacht Design has come back onboard to help with the ITC, and Steve Benjamin is the new ORC Congressman to represent the US. Along with Jason Ker's work with ITC now in its second year, this represents a fresh infusion of Anglo culture and talent into helping grow and improve ORC.

(6) Transparency: The ORC's Sailor Services system continues to expand and provide unique public access to the ORC database, with almost 70,000 boat measurement records now accessible online for free copies of issued certificates and unlimited test runs available for only €10 each. With instructions available in nine languages, this is a tremendous resource with valuable measurement and rating data on thousands of boat types.

However... with good grades and increased popularity comes higher levels of competition that push the rule limits, putting the system under more pressure to perform. So several initiatives will be on the table for discussion at the AGM in Oman:

- Convincing ISAF that it's better to have three rather than just two classes at the world championship, given the broad spread of boat types being raced. While the existing Class B fleet had about a 54 sec/mi rating spread between fastest and slowest boats, the Class A fleet was spread out nearly three times more widely in rated speed. The three-class approach worked well at the Europeans in Sweden, where the fast HPR-style boats were separated out of the Class A group to race themselves, and hopefully can be used at the 2014 ORC worlds in Kiel.

- A review of the equipment and safety rules to make sure they are relevant to current trends.

- Further development of the UMS concept with RORC and US Sailing to include all relevant measurements of a boat for use in any measured rating system, an idea that RORC's Mike Urwin has aptly described as a 'passport' of measurement identity for any boat.

- Development of an officially approved method for Performance Curve Scoring that is open-source and thus available for any programmer to use in the development of new web-based scoring tools.

- Review the Green Book criteria for the European Championship to explore if it would not be even more popular if compressed into less than the current week-long format.

- Discuss the establishment of standard recommended rating bands to help define classes for use by national rating offices and event organisers, and to also give new designs some size and performance value targets.

Plus the ITC, led by Alessandro Nazareth, has its ongoing research agenda to improve the VPP with new CFD and wind tunnel research to better characterise, for example, how modern raceboats depower upwind through flattening and twist rather than reefing. Nazareth is also collaborating with HPR in helping rule authors Bill Lee and Jim Teeters to better estimate VCG from component measurement methods.

As for the 'one world, one rule' talks with RORC, the concept is not dead... ORC continues to look for opportunities to pursue this lofty goal.

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