

## Too much of a good thing?

The latest head count for entries to the ORC world championship in Kiel in August is an astonishing 150 boats – the largest ever in any offshore world championship to date. While most are from the host country Germany, almost half are from 15 other countries, and not just the Baltic region: for example, there are already four entries registered from Italy.

And while these Italian entries are from among the strongest teams seen competing in recent championships, they may have a tougher time of it compared to previous years. There is a higher general talent level in the entries for Kiel, with many competitive regattas available for tune-up (like Kiel Week), plus the fact that the fleet will now be divided into three classes which should give a tighter focus to the competition.

This strong participation can be seen as a positive sign of health, not just for ORC but for the fact that the other elements of success have fallen into place nicely: a strong organising authority, a great venue and a confidence among participants that they will have a great week of sailing. This is a refreshing change from some other recent high-level events where participation levels are down, largely due to a worrisome sentiment best expressed as ‘we have no shot at winning, so why play?’



Chair Alessandro Nazareth (left) and other ITC members joined North Sails Italy in a recent continuation of sail tests in the wind tunnel at Milan Polytechnic. The goal is to refine calibration with a parallel study using OpenFOAM software at the Wolfson Unit

Yet despite all this success a nagging problem does remain: how will race managers handle such a substantial fleet? Where is the correct balance between quantity and quality?

Faced with a similar problem in Helsinki in 2012, and with only two and not three sets of trophies on offer, organisers divided the larger Class B into two groups, and raced both separately in the first few races to seed a Gold and Silver fleet for this class. Once the Gold fleet entries were determined they continued to race for the podium prizes, while the Silver fleet raced for their own set of trophies.

The other issue will be where to split these classes. Rather than using size alone, ORC classes are typically defined by rated speed, with the traditional A/B split being at 600 sec/mi in General Purpose Handicap (GPH). But with a new and faster Class A, this split figure is currently uncertain. DSV, the rating authority in Germany, analyse their fleet's ratings at the start of each year after running everyone through the latest VPP. They then make class splits where it makes most sense in terms of numbers and styles of boats, and use these definitions for all events in the season, which this year includes the worlds.

In fact, there is a proposal in front of Paolo Massarini's Events Committee to do much the same for the entire ORC fleet of 8,000-some boats in the world, and then have complete uniformity throughout the system. However, while this can provide useful guidance for designers and builders in deciding new products, what may work in Germany's fleet may not work in Italy's or in the Netherlands. Such a change may undermine an attractive feature of ORC: to let each country manage its own fleets.

### Sailor Services

One of the strongest features of the ORC system is its transparency, and having all its components made available online. For designers this is being able to buy the Designer version of the VPP and run their own ratings on new designs, and for sailors it's being able to access any boat in the database and download a Speed Guide of polar performance, run test certificates... and now access some new features.

These include a new Target Speed product, a formatted table of upwind and downwind VMG boatspeed and wind angle values that is generated for a range of wind speeds. These are designed to be downloaded and then laminated for use onboard. The price of this product is a modest €25, and is intended to be a starting point for teams interested in further developing their performance targets.

Another new feature of Sailor Services is the addition of a larger input field for a boat's sail inventory, so that a selection from a multiple set of sail measurements can be made when running test certificates. This saves having to create new records whenever a new sail is tested for rating effect. It is a nice feature for active programmes as they not only add sails, but reconfigure themselves for inshore, offshore and/or shorthanded modes and need new certificates for each. Test certificates cannot be used for racing, but this at least allows the user to see the effects and make sail choices accordingly.

Lastly, a deal struck with ORA now allows ORC access to its measurement data gathered for the past 10 years since IMS was dropped in the US. This means that anyone in the US who may want to race overseas in ORC can now run an ORC Club or ORCi test certificate, or any other feature in the Sailor Services system. HPR test certificates will also soon be available through this same portal, although these will be at no charge since the HPR rating calculator is available online at the HPR website.

Eventually this same system can be used to access any boat's measurements as part of the Universal Measurement System... but more work will be needed to access more databases to achieve this lofty goal.

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