

Lee Valley Model Yacht Club
(RED, YELLOW, GREEN, GO)

Need to spice up your club racing? Fall-out of Newcomers a problem? Bored with the same members winning week after week?

Then you may find the answer in The RYGGed Start - a personal handicapping system designed to encourage beginners and add excitement back into club racing

The Problem

Experienced 'model yachters' tend to forget that to newcomers, model yacht racing can appear a pretty daunting experience. This can be particularly true at the start, when anarchy and overcrowding readily overwhelms the beginner. As a result, the 'fall-out' rate of newcomers can be very high.

To overcome this problem the Lee Valley Model Yacht Club (Club website address is <http://website.lineone.net/~lvmyc/>) introduced, in 1991, a personal handicapping system (the Rygged Start) that was designed to:

1. Relieve the beginner of the pressures of crowded start lines, until such time as they are sufficiently experienced to cope.
2. Give encouragement, by enabling some early wins.
3. Eliminate the beginner's proneness to hanging around well behind the the start line in order to avoid close contact sailing.

The Solution- The Rygged Start (Red/Yellow/Green/Go)

Every member shall be given a personal handicap based on past performance. Newcomers will automatically be granted a 'full' handicap upon joining the club, unless they are of proven ability as a result of past membership of another club.

The handicap granted shall indicate the number of seconds advantage that a sailor shall have at the start and shall be according to the following table:

TABLE 1

Handicap Color	Handicap Advantage
Red	30 seconds
Yellow	20 seconds
Green	10 seconds
No Color	Start at Start signal

Each sailor possessing a handicap shall carry a Colored TELL-TALE on the BACK STAY of their boat. Any boats not carrying a Tell-Tale will be expected to start at the start signal.

Boats with a Red handicap are allowed to cross the start line up to 30 seconds 'early' i.e. on the 30 seconds count on the start tape. The Race Officer will announce 'Reds Away'.

Boats with a Yellow handicap are allowed to cross the start line up to 20 seconds 'early' i.e. on the 20 second count on the start tape. The Race Officer will announce 'Yellows Away'.

Boats with a Green handicap are allowed to cross the start line up to 10 seconds 'early' i.e. on the 10 second count on the start tape. The Race Officer will announce 'Greens Away'.

When a sailor has won 'X' or more races (see table below) of a session (say one day's or half day's sailing, they will be moved down one Color. An outright session win will also result in a lowering of the handicap by one Color.

TABLE 2

No of races in session	No of wins 'X' necessary to change down one Color
0 – 5	2
6 – 9	3
10 +	4

Once a sailor has moved down a Color they may not be moved back up at any time.

Optional Notes:

1. Tell-Tales can be made available from the Race Officer. Any 'promotions' from one Color to another can be announced by the Race Officer at the end of a session and can be accompanied by a rousing cheer from everyone present.

2. Introducing the system can be achieved in a number of ways. You can, for example, start by giving every member a Red handicap. This can lead to an interesting and exciting year's racing as members sort themselves out into their real ability levels.

3. Another benefit of the system is the way in which beginners are introduced to close quarter racing 'gradually'. This occurs as the faster sailors catch them up after the start and try to overhaul them.

4. The advantages gained by the system is fixed in terms of time but the relative benefit will depend on the length of the races i.e. a 20 second advantage is more beneficial on a race lasting 10 minutes than a race lasting 15 minutes. The times suggested have worked well over a long trial period and should not be changed. The system has the benefit of naturally sorting itself out so long as a club aims for reasonably consistent race lengths throughout the season.

5. After 8 years the system is still in regular use at Lee Valley. We have a number of sailors who now race regularly at national level and who came to us with no previous knowledge of sailing or racing.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO COPY AND USE THE RYGGED START SYSTEM AS YOU WISH.

The creator would welcome feed back from any club using the system. Please e-mail David Smythe <mailto:david.smythe@btinternet.com>