

Odds & Evens

by Steve Lang

At one time or another you will sail in a fleet that is too large to start at one time. Opinions differ on how large a one-start fleet should be, but most will agree that 14 is about the upper end. If you sail more than this at one time, starts and mark rounds change quickly to chaos.

To the best of my knowledge, the Odds & Evens race management and scoring system made its way into the US from Europe around 2002. The first major regatta run in the US with this system was the RC Laser National Championships in 2002.

To explain the O&E program, let's assume that we have 20 entries, and that we have decided that we will not start more than 14 boats in any one race.

In O&E we don't use the word heat, because heats are often defined as a part of a race. In O&E, each competition is scored as a complete race alternating one Odd race, and one Even race.

To start the regatta, half the boats entered are placed in the first Odd race (chosen randomly). There is no reason to worry about the relative skills of the sailors. The remainder of the skippers will sail in the first Even race.

At the end of the first Odd race, the finishing sail numbers are recorded on a simple Race Finish Sheet, from 1st place to whatever. The same is true with the Even race.

At this point we start using the definition of Odds and Evens. Following our example fleet, we have 10 boats in the first Odd race, half of our 20 entries. Their finishes are recorded 1-10. All boats finishing in the Odd positions (1,3,5,7, etc.), will automatically sail in the next Odd race. Likewise, the Even finishers (2,4,6,8) will sail in the next Even race. The same is true of the finish places in the first Even Race.

Roll Call – One problem with any system where different skippers are sailing in races is alerting skippers of their upcoming race. I have found that the very best method is to have a roll call at the beginning of each race. Have a race official actually call the list of sail numbers that are competing in the upcoming race and REQUIRE the skipper to answer.

You can download this scoresheet at: www.amya.org/resources.html

To recap the procedure, the first two races, Odd and Even, are populated by the race committee with no need to seed in any manner. From then on for the remainder of the regatta (even over multiple days), the races alternate Odd, then Even, and are populated based on the finishes of the previous Odd and Even races. The result is a very balanced shuffling of the entire fleet from beginning to end.

Every race is scored on the Race Finish Sheet and then transferred to a composite Regatta sheet. At any time along the way, the scorekeeper can easily tally the scores and post them. These interim scores can include the throw-outs available at the time. The scoring is as simple as scoring a single fleet of 10 boats.

Pros

- A very easy regatta to run.

IF the race official calls the sail numbers for the next race, and requires an answer, everyone gets on the water and sails without stress.

- Skippers enjoy the chance to sit out every other race or so. This break also considerably lessens the need for repair time outs.

- The scorekeeper thinks he has died and gone to heaven for sure. See the simple score sheets below. They are easily done by hand, and work equally as well on a simple spreadsheet computer program.

- Protests do not need to be heard immediately after the race in which it occurred, since the random mix of O&E simply isn't affected.

Cons

- Mixed skill levels - Some may complain that a wide range of skills in one race is unfair to the better sailor. I personally find this hard to justify since good sailors know how to stay out of trouble and how to work themselves out of difficult positions. And the real benefit is that the only way to sharpen your skills is to sail with someone better than you.

- Who's who - Sometimes it is easy to lose track of your closest competitors since they may not always be sailing with you. Therefore, it is wise to always watch the other race to see who is doing well.

- The maximum number of boats that can be raced together in this system is limited to 28 (if you agree that 14 is the limit in any single race). The system can be doubled up on separate courses or by sailing one O&E fleet while the other sits out for a sequence of races. In this way, the number climbs to 48.

I have had the opportunity to run national level regattas with both the Heat Management System (promotion/relegation), and with O & E. You will have a happier race committee, and a much happier and relaxed group of sailors using O&E.

The score sheets illustrated here are available in Excel from Steve Lang, RC Laser Class secretary. Reach Steve at Steve@ModelSailingCenter.com.