

Conduct of Championships

Regional and national championships are the high points of the year for most sailors. Well-run events are crucial to keep your class growing.

BY CLARK CHAPIN

Introduction

Class championships are the single most important annual event for most classes.

Participation in the National Championship Series (NCS) is an important gauge of the growth or stability of a class and the same is true for District or Regional regattas.

Hosting a successful NCS can also be a big boost for new or resurgent fleets. The success of an NCS is due to four factors that are discussed in this section:

- **Excellent facilities.** There should be no hardship on the part of the competitors to attend the event. This includes everything from directions on how to find the site, parking, mooring, dining, and housing through baby-sitting and the location of the nearest marine hardware store.
- **Championship caliber racing.** The race management, courses, and judging should be a cut or more above what the sailors can get at their local club level. This does not mean that the wind never shifts, but that the race committee sets the best possible courses and runs races where the winners are determined by sailing skill alone, not by luck or race committee action.
- **Hospitality.** Everyone at the site should make the competitors feel welcome. The competitors have traveled far and given up valuable vacation time to attend. To be greeted with indifference (or even rudeness) would have a chilling effect on future participation.
- **Take home something positive.** Everyone at the event should take home something, tangible or intangible, from the event. This could be something they learned by sailing against the best competition the class has to offer, a

treasured sailing experience, a T-shirt, or a trophy.

Tools

To accomplish these things, the organizing authority (usually the class) has to provide some direction to the host club. This section of the Class Management Handbook contains examples of how various classes provide this direction. The most important aspect of these examples is not that they may be picture perfect for your class, but that every class must pay attention to these aspects of the NCS if they want to attract sailors to their events year after year. There are four ways for the host club to figure out how to put on an NCS. The only problem is that two of them do not work consistently and another is not recommended.

- A. **Depend on the host club to figure it out for themselves.** This is one of the choices that do not work. If you are lucky enough to consistently pick first-rate clubs, you can go for years without any effort on the part of the class. The only problem is that sooner or later your luck will run out and boy, will you be sorry! This can be especially disastrous if the host club is a fledgling or fragile fleet. Giving the host club the guidance, they may need without having to ask is something you owe to them.
- B. **Reinvent your nationals every year. This is the other choice that does not work.** The natural turnover in your organization will lead to inconsistent results. The good ones will be good, but the bad ones will be awful. This also makes for more work for the National Race Committee each year.
- C. **Write the NCS requirements into the bylaws.** This approach works well to insure a minimum quality event, but it's not recommended for one simple

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reason – improvements are too hard to implement. Bylaws are usually changed only with a vote of the entire membership and that cumbersome process makes it hard to respond to changing trends. For example, the switch from triangular to windward-leeward courses. Tradition and inertia may prevent innovation. Even simple changes in rule numbers to conform to the Racing Rules of Sailing would require membership votes. Doesn't your class have better things to do?

- D. **Adopt the NCS requirements as a policy, not a bylaw.** This is the best of all arrangements. The requirements can be as detailed as you wish them to be and can be fine-tuned each year to incorporate the lessons learned. They can also be suspended when conditions warrant. For example, if your class usually wants weather legs one mile long, you can suspend this requirement if you decide that you want to accept a bid to host the event from a venue with more restricted water. Having a published policy also allows you to respond easily to inquiries about what it takes to host the NCS.

Regatta Planning

US Sailing has an excellent 32-page Regatta Management Resource Manual that contains lots of information, including a detailed planning checklist. It is intended for clubs that are hosting a US Sailing National Championship, but a slightly abbreviated version for a NCS is included in the following pages. The Manual itself is available for download at: https://cdn.ussailing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Regatta-Management-Resource-Manual_v6-Jan2020.pdf

Safety

The image shows a template for an Emergency Card. At the top, it says 'Name of Org: Emergency Card'. Below that, there's a section for 'Name of Regatta' with a dropdown menu. The card is divided into several sections: 'Emergency Contact Information' (with fields for Name, Phone, Email, and Address), 'Regatta Information' (with fields for Name, Date, Location, and Contact), and 'Regatta Location' (with a map and fields for Name, Date, and Contact). There's also a table for 'Regatta Officials' with columns for Name, Title, and Contact. The card is designed to be a quick reference for emergency services.

Gowrie Emergency Card Template

Last, but certainly not least, is the subject of safety, both on an off the water. The host club should have a comprehensive safety plan. Again, US Sailing, through

the Gowrie Group, has some excellent resources, including a safety card template. The Gowrie Burgee Program Safety Resources can be seen at: <https://gowrie.com/USSailingPrograms/SafetyResourcesDownload.aspx>

Summary

The following articles offer ideas about how to make fun, enjoyable events happen. One final note about Sailing Instructions: The simplest way to provide great sailing instructions for the NCS is not to use those that the host club may use for their club races, but to use the Sailing Instruction Guide that is available on line at www.USSailing.org.

Every year, many appeals come to the US Sailing Appeals Committees that hinge on poorly worded sailing instructions. One of the worst possible results for an NCS is to have the championship depend upon an appeal. Stick to the template and the judges will love you, you'll have fewer problems, fewer questions at the competitors meeting for the race officers and judges, and less heartache for all concerned.

Best tip (no exaggeration!): Buy or download US Sailing's current Race Management Handbook. Call 1 800 US-SAIL-1 and charge to credit card, or order from the US Sailing web site:

USSailing.org.

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(Adapted from the US Sailing Regatta Management Resource Manual (Jan 2020 Edition): HOST CHAIR COUNTDOWN SCHEDULE AND CHECKLIST – FOR A NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Each Chair will adapt their own schedule. A month-by-month “key date” is very helpful as a way to spread out the work load and ensure that all bases are covered.

ONE YEAR BEFORE EVENT

- Attend this year’s Championship. Next year’s rep should try to be housed with this year’s chair.
- Championship national chair meets with host chair to debrief their observations. Next year’s chair should be included.

11 MONTHS BEFORE

- Solicit committee members and volunteers
- Hold preliminary meeting of committee members
- Begin matching volunteers with responsibilities
- Ensure your club’s calendar remains free for the Championship
- Consider holding several fund raisers over winter and early spring to help defray expenses

10 MONTHS BEFORE

- Discuss the necessity of charter availability for competitors.
- Ask National Chair who will be appointed chief judge; discuss who will be PRO. with National Chair.
- Check status of insurance. Ensure current coverage with Regatta Liability

Insurance, and if Borrowed Boat insurance is needed, arrange for it.

- Review last year’s budget (if available) and prepare a preliminary budget.
- The National Chair is responsible for writing the NOR. He or she will provide you with an NOR. Team with them to ensure that it is correct and meets your needs, as the host.
- Agree upon a PRO with your national chair.

9 MONTHS BEFORE

- Confirm your committee members and volunteers
- Work with your designated Sponsorship Committee Chair to research and follow up leads for local sponsorship
- Work with your PR/Media Committee Chair to prepare a “media plan” to show sponsors how the event will give them visibility.
- Raise awareness among host club members about the upcoming Championship.

8 MONTHS BEFORE

- See if you need a Regatta Permit from the U.S. Coast Guard. Go to the Waterways Management for your sector of the Coast Guard District in which you are located. The first place to look is the USCG District Website for your CG District and determine which sector you are in. Depending on where you are, you may be able to fill out the application online

7 MONTHS BEFORE

- Have a conference call with National Chair and all your committee chairs to answer questions and confirm details
- Continue to work on outreach for local sponsorship

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- Continue to solicit host families, if needed, for judges.
- Organize motorboats and RIBs to be used for race management, judge boats, safety boat and coach boats. Confirm estimated number required with National Chair.

6 MONTHS BEFORE

- Send preliminary budget to National Chair.
- Prepare for online registration: what will be required - dates, housing, travel plans, T shirt sizes, etc. Review a selection of discounted registration & scoring platform options.

5 MONTHS BEFORE

- Work with your Safety Chair to confirm that all Safety/Risk Management procedures are in place.
- Identify an MD to have available during event.
- Formalize housing plans with respective committee chairs

4 MONTHS BEFORE

- Update budget, share with National Chair.
- Identify host families.
- Invite next year's host to your event. They should stay with you if possible.
- Meet with the charter provider, if applicable, to finalize facility layout and logistics.
- Prepare a welcome letter for competitors outlining the key information they will need to plan.
- Review the event registration with the National Chair before registration is opened to competitors.

12 WEEKS BEFORE

- Finalize designs for regatta apparel.
- Meet with committees to finalize budget, including food, entertainment and transportation

11 WEEKS BEFORE

- Confirm host families for judges.

10 WEEKS BEFORE

- Have your scorer familiarize themselves with the registration/scoring platform.

9 WEEKS BEFORE

- Work with your Safety Chair to confirm that all Safety/Risk Management procedures are in place.
- Confirm the MD to have available during event.

8 WEEKS BEFORE

- Work with your PR Committee chair to organize to have a photographer on site for the event
- Does your site have built in facilities for drinking water refill stations? If not, consider renting some for the event to prevent the use of single use water bottles.
- Create trailer drop off / parking plan.

6 WEEKS BEFORE

- Inform visiting race officers/ judges of their housing arrangements
- Review Class Championship requirements and make sure everything is in place: Grounds, parking, radios, safety boats

5 WEEKS BEFORE

- Confirm venues for evening entertainment, menus

4 WEEKS BEFORE

- Early Registration closes.
- Develop a transportation and housing matrix to coordinate airport pickup and delivery for judges.
- Review Sailing Instructions with National Chair before they are posted on the event website.

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3 WEEKS BEFORE

- Check that all class-supplied trophies, class banners, national sponsor banners, and other materials have arrived.
- Make sure computer equipment is organized, including AV, digital camera, scoring, etc.
- Identify registration area. Make sure there are enough outlets and access to WiFi.
- Confirm all food and drink orders with kitchen and vendors
- Have PR Committee Chair contact class PR people about publicity during and after the event.
- Provide final head count to host personnel, including guests who may be coming with sailors or to evening activities.

2 WEEKS BEFORE

- Finalize online program, if applicable.
- Finalize transportation plans. If possible, e-mail each judge flying in to confirm time and contact point/ person
- Identify MD on call; inform EMS of event and # participants; photocopy all medical forms and prepare a set to be kept on the medical boat (could be race committee boat)
- Determine where copies of the registration materials and medical information will be stored on shore for easy access during the championship
- Confirm trophy/trophies have been received and have a place to be displayed
- Consider holding a Q & A evening for host families (if applicable)
- Ensure that all Coast Guard requirements are met on all support boats

1 WEEK BEFORE

- Double-check all event schedules, menus, food/drink orders, photographers? Press boats?

- Check adequate supplies of water have been ordered
- Ensure the commodore etc. has been confirmed for the awards ceremony.

DAY BEFORE

- Ensure that everything is in place for delivery of charter boats (if applicable)
- Is your PR volunteer ready to write nightly reports post on line?
- Set up registration area, including club burgees and class banners
- Confirm with volunteers about transportation
- Hold final Q & A for volunteers
- Distribute support boat flags, banners
- Provide all parties with emergency frequencies and other related materials
- Ensure that medical boat has supplies and medical information
- Support boats fueled? Radios on board? Refueling instructions?
- Space ready for lunch preparation? Adequate supplies of water?
- Confirm National sponsor banners (if applicable) have been hung up
- Confirm scoring platform is set for online/real time reporting of results throughout event.

DURING THE CHAMPIONSHIP

- PR person - After each day's racing, post on line report.
- Registrar - Ensure that scores have been entered on the website.
- Photographer - send 20 best photos to class PR person.

FINAL DAY

- Finalize awards ceremony agenda with National Chair
- Ensure Sponsor photo backdrops are in place as necessary.
- If applicable, help charter rep ensure the boats are loaded prior to the awards.

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- After the awards, contact class PR people to develop that evening's press release.

AFTERWARD...

- Review host responsibilities with next year's chair and national chair.
- Hold final responsibility area chair meeting/fun social gathering to debrief and celebrate; send all constructive comments to National Chair
- Send finalized budget class.
- Return non-local banners.
- Return unused damage deposits within two weeks, if applicable.
- Consider sending a report to local sponsors with photographs and press clippings showing how they were featured during the event and include a thank-you note or framed photograph.
- Put your feet up and RELAX!!